

LOVAT DICKSON'S MAGAZINE

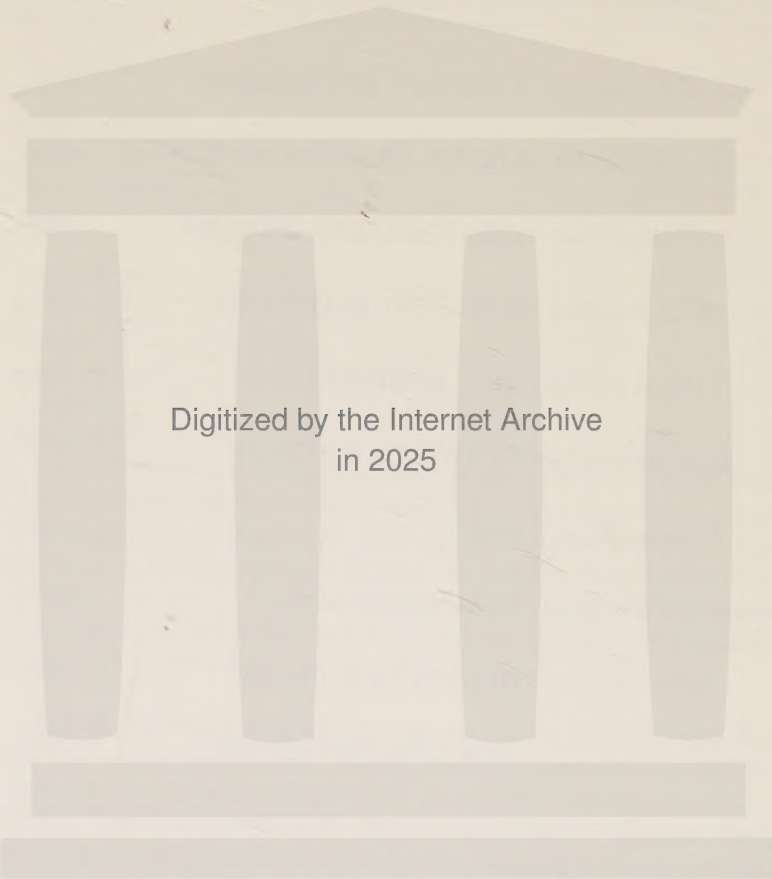
VOLUME 2, NUMBER 5 *Edited by P. Gilchrist Thompson*

MAY 1934

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The Editor will be glad to consider stories offered for publication and will endeavour to return unsuitable MSS. when they are accompanied by a stamped envelope. Neither the acceptance of and payment for a contribution, nor the sending of a proof, can be regarded as a guarantee of publication.

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Editorial Note

LOVAT DICKSON'S MAGAZINE now begins its second half-year, which seems a suitable moment to take stock as to how far we have succeeded in the aims which we set out in our first number.

Those aims were :—to offer to the public whom we believed were waiting for something of the kind, a Magazine of short stories of real literary quality, at a modest price, avoiding, in the stories chosen, the extremes of the "For highbrows only" brand, and the sugary sentimentality of the popular Magazines.

We hoped to attract contributions from the well-known, but also to give a fair chance to little-known or unknown writers—the story itself, we thought, should be the deciding factor, not the name at the top.

A glance at our list of contributors shows how far we have succeeded. There are a dozen or so in the first rank of living authors (no names, no pack-drill!) and many who can justly be called well known. Though in the main we have bought British, we have not been insular, for there are Russian, Swedish, German, French, Polish and Hungarian names, but only one American, the Dominions being well represented by Henry Handel Richardson in quality, if not in quantity.

To our regret, we find that we have accepted fewer stories

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than we expected from new writers : almost all contributors had one or more books, or published stories, already to their credit : in the craft of writing, as in any other, experience tells.

We certainly have not concentrated on any particular type of story, they have ranged between the extreme limits of the light-hearted fantasy of "After the Ball" to the grim truth of "The Thirty-one Men of Buzuluk," but, as we have commented before, the proportion of well-written stories dealing with more or less tragic subjects is so high that we have not been able, in every number, to keep the balance between grave and gay at all even, as we wished to do, since if short stories are thought of as snapshots of significant aspects of life, too long a series of the tragic side does not give a true impression of life as a whole.

We begin our second half-year with the belief that we shall be able to offer our readers, from the increasing number of suitable stories submitted, a still higher average quality of story, which will merit their continued support.

L. A. G. STRONG

Tuesday Afternoon

“**I** SAY, you chaps, *do* buck up. We’ll never get started at this rate.”

The round, ingenuous face of the assistant master was two shades redder than usual. He stood in the midst of the cloak-room, surrounded by a crowd of noisy small boys who were making only the most leisurely preparations for their walk. Singing, shouting, and laughing, they were gathered in groups in the various corners of the room, or ragging about generally. To Christopher Banks, exhorting and beseeching, they paid no attention whatever.

A couple, one boy chasing another to regain his cap, cannoned into the master, and the thief actually seized and used him as a buttress against his pursuer. Presented with a personal and legitimate cause for wrath, Banks grabbed each by the shoulder and shook them.

“Buck up, now, you chaps. Buck up at once. Do you hear me, Fenwick? Get your things on immediately, or I shall give you some lines.”

Fenwick, a thin, fair boy, with a somewhat girlish appearance which much belied his temperament, squirmed himself loose and clasped his shoulder with feigned anguish.

"Oh, sir, you hurt me. You're so strong, sir. You're so terribly strong. You don't realise your own strength, sir."

"Get out with you," retorted Banks, tempted to grin in spite of himself. "Get out with you. Nonsense."

The boy nodded ruefully, looking at him with mischievous eyes.

"It's a fact, sir. I shall be bruised black and blue. It's my bath night, too. I'll do my best to hide the awful mark, sir, because I should simply *bate* to get you into trouble."

"Get out," said Banks happily; then, realising that the din was becoming appalling, he started rushing about the room again. If he didn't get them out soon, old Sniffington would hear, and perhaps come down. Sniffington was not the headmaster's real name: it was Banks's own version of it, which he privately thought very witty.

"Come on, you chaps. Come on! Anyone who isn't ready in two minutes, I'll give him five lines."

"S—i—r." Several voices were raised in mock protest, and one added, "Oh, sir, you are fierce. You do bully us, sir."

"Bully you?" Eighteen months at St. Columb's had quite failed to teach Banks not to snap at any bait that was offered him. "Bully you? Good Lord, boy, you don't know what bullying means. I'm much too easy-going, that's what's wrong with me. Much too easy-go— *Henderson!* Stop that infernal din and get your boots on immediately. You'll have all the less time for your game if you don't buck up," he added to the assembly at large.

A boy named Fane came up to him and took his arm.

"We're nearly ready now, sir," he said soothingly. Before Banks could reply, another boy came and pushed the first aside.

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"Here, you get out. I've bagged his right arm."

Immediately a third boy seized Banks's left arm, putting his whole weight upon it and nearly toppling the master over.

"And bags I his left. Yet get out, slimy Fane," he added gratuitously.

This was too much, even for the amiable Banks.

"Get out, both of you," he cried indignantly, shaking himself free. "What on earth do you think I am? A parcel? What's that you said?" he went on fiercely, as one of the dispossessed muttered under his breath.

"Nothing, sir."

"Yes, you did. I distinctly heard you."

The boy stood smiling, with a kind of furtive insolence, glancing to left and right at his companions. So intent was Banks that he did not notice the room had become comparatively quiet.

"I insist on knowing what you said."

"Listeners hear no good of themselves," chanted a voice somewhere behind him, and Banks wheeled round on the instant.

"Who said that?"

"Who said what, sir?"

"You know perfectly well. You heard as well as I did."

"Heard, sir?"

As he stood undecided, a hand timidly touched his arm. It was the boy Fane.

"Shall we start, sir? Everyone's ready now."

Banks gave a snort of relief.

"Yes, for goodness' sake let's start. Now then, no bargaining there, Higgins. Shaddock and Ponsonby lead."

"Oh, sir, but you said——"

"Shaddock and Ponsonby lead."

Through the open door Banks had caught a glimpse of the headmaster at the far end of the passage. The boys had seen him too, and there ensued an orderly exit which much gratified Banks.

"May I walk with you, sir?" asked Fane timidly.

"Certainly. Very nice of you."

"And I, sir?"

"Yes. No, Lawson, I can't have three. How often have I told you. Only one on each side. Sorry, but the others got here first," he added, with that habitual blend of good-nature and weakness which was his undoing a dozen times a day.

The playing-fields of St. Columb's were nearly three miles distant, and were visited on four days a week—Mondays, Fridays, and the two half-holidays—in a special tram reserved for the school. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, between afternoon school and tea, the boys walked a mile and a half through the town to Devil's Point, where, close beside the sea, there was a large public playground, untenanted at that hour, a space where the hillside had been quarried out and made flat to form a small football or cricket ground. It had no grass; its turf was hard and poor. There were no goal-posts. A pair of overcoats or a pile of caps at either end did duty for the goals, and the touch-line was the quarry wall on one side and the footpath close to the sea's edge on the other. The game suffered from a number of restrictions. In the first place, the boys did not change their clothes for it. In the second, they played in their ordinary boots. Furthermore, they were forbidden to barge each other or tackle vigorously, because of the hard ground and the danger of crashing into the quarry wall. There was no "out" on the quarry side, and a real part of the tactics of this special game lay in kicking the ball against the wall so that it should

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rebound to the advantage of the player's side. The boys liked the game well enough in the earlier stages of the term, but later on, as the afternoons grew darker and the time shorter, they became bored with it, and resented the long walk each way for the sake of what, by December, was only twenty minutes' play.

On Thursdays, the headmaster went himself, but on Tuesdays Banks had to take the boys alone. He had begun by liking it, but now, of all the week's tasks, he looked forward to it the least. He had had bad luck lately. Things had gone wrong. A boy had been barged into the quarry wall and had cut his head. ("But I don't understand, Mr. Banks. It is a definite rule that boys are not allowed to barge one another during the game.") A football had been lost, kicked across the path into the sea. ("Very unfortunate indeed, Mr. Banks. In fact, in all my previous experience, I have never known such a thing occur.") Then there had been that complaint from a parent, who had seen the boys walking five abreast on the pavement instead of in the correct two by two, and had told the headmaster that they were crowding people off into the gutter.

Altogether, things had not been too good lately, with the result that Tuesday afternoon had got upon Christopher Banks's nerves, and he was thankful when his charges were safely home, and it was over.

"Have you always been a schoolmaster, sir?"

Recalled to himself, Banks looked down at his favourite.

"No, Fane, no. I haven't."

"What were you before you were one, sir?"

He did not answer at once. Looking along the line of boys, he saw that it was beginning to straggle and spread out. That was another danger. If they were not watched, the leaders would set a furious pace, get out of touch with

the main body, and, once they were safely round a corner out of sight, go into a sweet shop and buy illegal provender.

He had deliberately chosen Shaddock and Ponsonby to-day, because as a rule they could be trusted; but already—yes, and there in the middle were three or four boys already walking together.

“Wait a minute.”

He detached himself from his two companions and began to run along the line, on the outside of the pavement.

“Get in, there, get *in*,” he exhorted, as he ran along. “How do you think people are going to get past if you straggle all over the pavement? Get on the *inside*, I tell you.”

Mechanically they obeyed, giving him barely a glance, going on uninterrupted with their conversations. Panting, he reached the group of delinquents in the middle, two couples absorbedly talking together and amalgamated for the purpose.

“What I don’t see is,” one was saying, “why we shouldn’t talk about it.”

“Yes, that’s what I don’t understand.”

“What on earth do you fellows think you’re doing, sprawling all over the pavement? Will you get into twos properly?” Banks gave the arm of the outermost a sharp tap with his walking-stick. “Get in, O’Reilly. It’s always you. If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a dozen times.”

“Ow, sir!”

“Ow sir be blowed. I’ll give you Ow sir.”

“But you hurt me, sir.”

“Not half as much as I’ll hurt you in a minute.”

“You’re not supposed to hit us with your stick, sir. My father will be very angry. He’ll attend in person at the school, sir.”

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"He'll attend in person at the inquest, if you don't shut up."

A laugh went up. The victim grinned sulkily, still rubbing his arm.

And Banks, well content, forgetting all about the leaders, stood and waited for the tail of the procession to catch up on him.

"Well," he said, smiling, and fell in with Fane and his companion. "Now then, what were we talking about?"

"You were telling us about before you became a school-master, sir."

A shadow crossed Banks's face. His momentary contentment left him.

"Yes," he said gloomily. "I've been several things in my time, and a failure at every one."

"Oh no, sir."

Fane pressed his arm affectionately, looking up at him.

"Yes, Fane, old boy; a failure at every one. It's no good my pretending that I wasn't, because I was. I read for the Church for a bit, after I came down from Cambridge—I wasn't much good there either, I might as well tell you. I mean, I had a grand time, but I d— jolly nearly missed my degree. (Get *in* there, Higgins. Walk on the *inside*! Can't you understand English?) Yes, I read for the Church for a bit, but somehow I didn't think it was going to suit me, and the head of the theological college didn't think I was going to suit it."

"I can't quite imagine you as a clergyman, sir."

"Neither could I. That was the trouble. So I went to my governor, and told him that was no good. He was frightfully sick, because he's a parson himself. In fact, he wouldn't have sent me to Cambridge if he hadn't thought I'd go in for the Church afterwards. Then one of my uncles

used a bit of influence to get me a job in a business in town."

Banks broke off. He had always the power of hypnotising himself with his own speech or thoughts, and memories of town came up so vividly before his mind that he forgot his surroundings in contemplation of them. The boy beside him waited for a minute or so, and then gently pulled his arm.

"What happened then, sir? Didn't you like the business?"

"Eh, what? The business? It wasn't bad, you know, but it was rather dull." Banks gave a half-laugh, and turned red. "The fact is, the business didn't like me."

There was an embarrassed pause. Fane's quick perceptions saw that he had touched on a painful subject.

"Then I tried a job in a bank, and I was no good at that either. Never had a head for figures."

"That's why you don't teach maths at all, I expect, isn't it, sir?"

"That's right. Heaven help anyone I had to teach maths to."

He relapsed into silence. Nice little chap, Fane. The other chap, Osborne, was all right too. All the same it was silly of him, probably, to go talking about himself like this. Banks heaved a sigh. Every day he did at least half a dozen impulsive things which he regretted as soon as they were done. Oh, well, what did it matter? It would all come out in the wash. All the same a hundred years hence.

His eye was caught by the behaviour of three or four boys in front. They were larking about, playing tig on the pavement, and as he watched he saw one of them, helpless with laughter, cannon into a lady and barely stop to apologise. That odious little lout Sandford. Uttering an inarticulate cry, Banks ran along the pavement and reached the group.

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"What on earth do you chaps think you're doing, assing about all over the pavement like this? Sandford, did you see that you bumped into that lady then? Sandford, do you hear what I say?"

Still laughing, the boy took no notice, keeping his eyes still on his pursuer, who was making threatening signs to him from behind Banks's back. It was not insolence; it was worse. The boy completely ignored him.

"SANDFORD! Do you hear what I say?"

And, raising his stick, he caught the boy a sharp crack on the thigh.

The effect was dramatic. Uttering a howl, the boy seized his injured leg and began to limp convulsively about the pavement.

"Ow!" he blubbered. "Ow, ow, ow!"

The others gathered round him with every appearance of sympathy.

"Don't say a word to him," stormed Banks. "He hasn't had half he deserves, the beastly ill-mannered little lout, barging into ladies on the pavement."

"That's no reason for you to hit me as hard as you can with your beastly great stick," wailed the victim, his power of speech returning.

"Get on, get on at once." Turning round, his anger subsiding into the usual apprehension, Banks shooed at the other boys, who had gathered round in a circle and were obstructing the whole pavement, causing passers-by, with wondering, hostile glances, to step off into the road. "Get on, will you? Walk properly two by two. And you, Sandford, stop that ridiculous fuss and get on at once."

To his surprise, the boy obeyed, though limping and still clutching his thigh.

"I'll tell my father as soon as I get home," he whimpered.

"Tell your nannie too, while you're about it. And your little sisters."

And the harassed master fell back once more, rejoining his faithful escort.

It was not far now to the Point, thank goodness. Five minutes more, and they were out of the streets and walking along the path above the rocks. Here the two-by-two rule was relaxed. A grey sea was running in the estuary, and a light cruiser steamed slowly past the Point, making for the Sound and the open sea. The sight of her distracted the boys' attention from all else. They ran along to the wall, uttering cries which blended with those of the gulls that wheeled above. Banks turned to Fane and Osborne.

"Wouldn't you like to run on and have a look too?"

"No, sir," answered Fane. "We can see perfectly well from here. Can't we, Osborne?"

A ray of warmth shone in Banks's heart, and he smiled. Then anxiety once more assailed him. That beastly Sandford. He was still limping, even with the cruiser to look at. Supposing he had really hurt him? Suppose the boy did tell his father? That would never do. George Sandford, owner of a big general stores near the dockyard, was an influential parent, and an ugly one to offend. Oh, damn it all, there was no peace at this job, no peace whatever. He'd better get out of it: get out, before he was shot out. Perhaps he'd solved the problem already, he thought grimly. If George Sandford cut up rough, old Sniffington was quite capable of giving a chap the push.

"Come on, you chaps, come on. Can't stand there the whole afternoon. We haven't much time for the game as it is."

"Oh, sir, isn't she a beauty?"

"Sir, don't you wish you were on board?"

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"No, I don't. I should be beastly sick."

"Oh, sir! You *are* a landlubber."

"Landlubber yourself. Come on, I want to pick up sides. Come on. Who are the captains? Come on. Everybody round me here. Who are the captains, I say? Edgington, pick up, or I shall depose you and choose someone else. Now, who'll be blues, and who'll be whites?"

"Blues" was natural enough, for the school cap was blue; but "whites" was a courtesy title, its members quite simply turning their caps inside out.

Gathering the boys into some semblance of order, Banks produced half a crown and tossed it.

"Heads."

"Tails!"

"Whites on my right, blues on my left. Blues pick first. Now then, Edgington, your pick."

"Higgins."

"Martin."

"Edwards."

"Spottiswoode."

The two captains bid against one another briskly to begin with, snapping up the best performers. Then they began to hesitate.

"I'll—have——" The captain looked round undecidedly upon the bunch remaining, while his subordinates nudged him and whispered advice in his ear.

"Leave him *alone*, Bateson. It's his choice, not yours."

"I'll have—Merryweather."

"Curse," replied his ungrateful choicc, taking off his cap and reversing it. "I wanted to be on Dawson's side."

"Well, you're on mine, so jolly well play up, see?"

"Who shall I have?" The other captain addressed the

air. "I can't have Briggs: he stinks. Fane's no good, he walks about on the touch-line dreaming. I don't want——"

"Pick up," roared Banks. "Pick up, or I'll choose for you."

At last they were started. Trotting about with a whistle, Banks had a few moments' peace. He did not use the whistle much. It was best, he had learned from experience, to leave the boys undisturbed. Their natural interest in the game had taken their attention from him, and the less he reminded them of his presence, the better. He hung about on the seaward side of the ground, keeping a perfunctory eye on the game and looking out across the water at the cruiser. She was slewing round, getting clear of the river mouth into the open water. What must it be like on board? He might have been all right in the navy. Lucky devils, anyway, getting clear. For a moment he half wished himself on board, away from St. Columb's and all to do with it. It was no life for a man, nurse-maiding a pack of brats. It had its consolations, but that was just the trouble: they *were* consolations. If you had a proper, decent sort of a life, you wouldn't need consoling. The good bits of life at St. Columb's were just the bits you got to yourself, the bits that weren't actively beastly.

Reminded of his fear, he looked for the boy Sandford. He was still limping, confound him. Hullo, there was some sort of a dispute. Banks walked across. It settled itself before his arrival. Sandford passed, and Banks smiled at him. The boy looked away and scowled. Still sulking, the little brute. Very well, let him.

"Offside, offside!"

"It wasn't."

"Yes, it was. Miles offside."

"Sir, wasn't that offside?"

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"I don't know," said Banks. "I didn't see."

"Now then, ref, where's your eyes?"

The parody of a cry from the local professional ground raised a laugh. About to protest, Banks thought better of it.

"Here, give me the ball. I'll bounce it. That will be fair to all concerned."

"No, it won't, sir. I had a clear goal."

"Oo, you dirty liar. You were miles offside."

"No, I wasn't."

"I should have saved it, anyhow," interpolated the goal-keeper disdainfully.

"Shut up!" roared Banks. "Shut up. Now, stand back." He bounced the ball, and the tide of the game once more eddied about him.

For ten minutes the game went on, and then Banks called half-time. It was getting dark. There'd probably be rain before night. Clouds came rolling up from the low Cornish hills. The sea was ruffling stiffly in the Sound.

From time to time Banks's eye nervously picked out Sandford. The boy was still limping a little, but taking more part in the game. Presently, as he stood near the half-way line, the ball rolled out to him. No one was near.

"Now then, Sandford, there's your chance. Shoot, man, shoot!"

Pulling himself together, steadying himself, the boy took a shot at goal. The kick was of academic perfection, marred only by the fact that Sandford, who was a little to one side, kicked straight in front of him. Beginning low, the ball rose above the players, then dropped steeply a yard or so to the right of the goal.

"Oh, good shot, sir, good shot!" Banks broke into loud shouts of ecstasy. "A lovely shot."

The goalkeeper made a gesture of derision.

"What's the fuss, sir? It went wide."

"Never mind," cried Banks. "It was a lovely kick, from all that distance out. I've seldom seen a better."

Sandford's face broke into an unwilling smile at the praise. He began to play up fiercely. His limp disappeared.

Presently, catching Banks's eye, he returned the master's smile.

An immense relief flooded Banks's heart. That was all right, then, thank the Lord. He'd managed to square the boy. That was all right. The boy wouldn't tell his father now. Whew, what a relief!

Beaming, he began to rush about, encouraging everybody, blowing enormous blasts upon his whistle, blasts of which no one took any notice. Good-humour, like a sudden infection, fell upon all the boys. Laughing, they scurried and scrambled about, giving up all pretence of playing the game seriously. In a moment Banks had joined in with them. Usually, such an action would have roused howls of protest, but to-day they only laughed, and laughed more when presently, declaring that he could not give his favours to one side only, he took off his cloth cap and put it on inside out to play upon the other. When the time came to return, everyone was quite breathless from exercise and laughter. Glowing with satisfaction, Banks looked round upon his flock.

"Now then, chaps, homeward bound. Same leaders."

There was no bother on the homeward walk. Happily tired, the boys rambled peacefully along. The musical chatter of their voices was echoed off the high wall, and when they came to the street they went in orderly file along the inside of the pavement without a word from their shepherd. The street lamps were lit. Lights were twinkling everywhere, the town's cheerful response to the menace thrust upon it

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from the West. Banks, walking along with a boy on each arm, suddenly felt that life was not so bad after all. Tuesday afternoon was nearly over. He had a pleasant evening before him. He and old Laplace, the French beak, were going to have a nice little spot of dinner and then go on to the Cosmo to see the boxing. It would be a good evening, and Wednesday was a half-holiday, besides being an easy morning. Oh, there was something to be said for the life after all. The boys—they were natural enough, friendly enough, when one got on the right side of them. They weren't the little devils they seemed sometimes. He was on the right side of them now. Well, he'd jolly well stay there; and Christopher Banks resolved, by no means for the first time in his life, that whatever had happened in the past, he'd make a success of *this* job, anyway.

BILL ADAMS

Loard Open da Mouth o' da Gray Fish!

IT's a long time ago, and forgotten save in Shetland. One hundred years ago and one year over. But what's a hundred years? What's a long time to the sea, that doesn't count time in years or in any other manner?

It was at the time of Beltane, which is May's first week, that Peter Garriock set forth from Kullinsbroch in Shetland, skipper of a sixaern haaf boat; which is a six-oared sea boat. With him were his two sons and three other men. Six strong men to pull six long oars. And at the same time other haaf boats were setting forth from all the fishing stations of Shetland: from Federland and Gloop; from Norvik, Unst, Uya, Papa Stour, Aith, Gott, and Whalsay. And all those other men were setting forth prayerfully, having been to da kirk through the Sabbath just passed. Only Peter Garriock and his five men set forth godlessly, confident in their man-strength and their sea-skill to bring them good fishing. All through the fishing season of the preceding year they had had good fishing, though with all the other sixaern boats luck had been ill. Thanks to the poor fishing of the preceding year, all the other Shetland

LOARD OPEN DA MOUTH O' DA GRAY FISH!

fishermen were deep in debt to the landlord-merchants who owned the haaf boats. None save Peter Garriock and his men was free of debt. A proud man Peter Garriock was, setting forth for da gruns again; and all his men were proud with him.

Peter Garriock's boat was a new boat. Never before had she been out to the haaf fishing. Undecked, open to the sky, she was twenty feet long on her keel. As was the way with all the haaf boats, she was modelled after the Viking lang ships of long ago. Peter Garriock also was modelled after the Vikings, as were his men and all the other fishermen of Shetland. Descended direct from the Vikings they were, and their religion was a strange mixture of paganism and of Christianity.

The boards for Peter Garriock's new boat had been brought over from Norway all ready for putting together, as was the custom always with the Shetland haaf boats. Pine boards they were, and sweet-scented. Before they were put together an aged seaman was fetched to fin oot da misforn knots; to make sure that in the boards were no knots such as might bring the boat misfortune. Each board in which he found a round, black knot the old seaman caused to be set aside and replaced by another; for did a haaf boat have in her a board in which was a round, black knot she must of a certainty be lost. Every board in which was a knot that had running out from it a sprain resembling a wind straik ida sky was also set aside; for did a boat have such a knot in her boards she was fated always to fall in with gales and rough weather. And one board in particular the aged seaman had seen instantly and instantly had ordered discarded. In that board was a knot the shape of which resembled the shape of a cat. That board was fit for burning only. In some boards were good knots which, being shaped like fish, spelt luck. There

BILL ADAMS

were, too, many other knots of various shapes, some lucky, others unlucky, but capable of being sained, or placated, by a wise old seaman.

When the boards of Peter Garriock's boat had been sained and put together, she was launched, further to ensure good fortune, at high noon and at the time of high tide. And, to make full sure of avoiding misfortune, she was launched sungaets, with the sun. For if any haaf boat were to be launched widdershins, or against the sun, ill luck must of a surety be hers.

As was ever the custom at the time of Beltane when the fishing season started, a great foy, or feast, was held ere the sixaern boats set forth for da gruns. Much ale was drunk, and much mutton was eaten, and there was dancing and great rejoicing. When at the time of Laurencemass in mid-August the fishing season ended, there would be greater rejoicing yet, and yet greater feasting if the season had proven good. Aye, maybe some of the haaf fishermen would be out of debt by Laurencemass!

"Loard open da mouth o' da gray fish!" prayed the hundreds of Shetland fishermen, setting forth at the time of Beltane. Only Peter Garriock and his men said not that.

* * *

To and fro between da gruns, forty miles out at sea, and the drying beach, Peter Garriock took his sixaern boat through May, June, and the half of July. Sometimes when da gray fish opened their plentiful mouths well, and the winds were good, he came and went thrice in the week, his sail hard to the breeze. Sometimes when winds were light he and his men must do much rowing and so could scarce make two trips. But always each Saturday morning they hauled their lines and brought their boat in for the helly or week-end. No haaf boat ever spent the helly on da gruns. And over

LOARD OPEN DA MOUTH O' DA GRAY FISH!

the helly, which ended at dawn on Monday, no work was ever allowed once the boats had unloaded their catches.

On each drying beach was a rough earth hut, da lodge, to afford shelter for the fishermen over the helly. The landlord's store was nearby, with boat gear, lines, salt, and such merchandise as was needed by haaf men. Week by week Peter Garriock and his men landed their catch on the drying beach, where it was weighed, salted, and spread in the sun to dry; to be baled when dry, ready for shipment to the Baltic or Spain, to Portugal or France.

If any man lived not near the drying beach he might not go to his home over the helly, but must make his home at da lodge. Such was ever the custom. And on the Sabbath he must go to the nearest kirk to attend da meetin. The parish rancelman, or constable, would see that he did so. To see to the churching of the haaf men was during the fishing season the rancelman's chief duty. But never once did Peter Garriock nor any of his men go to da kirk. Over the helly they did as they willed, visiting their wives or their sweethearts, jesting and laughing and drinking much ale. At the angry rancelman they laughed openly and at the frowning dominie they smiled, vowing that they themselves would see that da gray fish opened their mouths and caring naught for da Loard.

Each Monday at dawn Peter Garriock and his men were busy getting their gear aboard: lines, hooks, bait, and faerdenmeat, which was the fare provided for the journey out to da gruns, the time on, and the journey back from them. A supply of meal for each man, a supply of boiled mutton, and a keg of blaand for all to share. Buttermilk over which had been poured hot water, blaand was: a sour drink yet very nourishing.

Each Monday evening Peter Garriock's sixaern boat was

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back on da gruns again, and the lines were soon down, baited with herring, mackerel, or haddock. Each of the six men must look after his own packie of line. A packie was made up of so many bouchts, each boucht being forty fathoms, or two hundred and forty feet long. On each boucht were a dozen hooks, fastened at regular distances by lines a yard long. Two dozen bouchts in all for the six men to care for. A total of twelve dozen hooks on lines that totalled in all close to eight hundred feet. Though it was midsummer in the North Atlantic the weather was often bitter cold. Aye, it took hard men for the Shetland haaf fishing : men of steel sinews.

Peter Garriock had no navigating instruments whatever. No charts, no sextant, no chronometer, no log, nor lead. If the weather were thick with driving mist or with listlessly drifting fog he found his way out to and back from da gruns by his sea sense solely. Forty miles out to da gruns he went and forty miles back time and again, surely as any landsman might make his way to and from market. To lose the coast of Shetland under the sea rim was nothing at all to him. If the weather were clear he watched the faces of the sky and sea and had an eye for the sun's upcoming and downgoing. Always he watched, and particularly if the weather were thick, the birds, the fish, the porpoise, seals, and whales. Save that he lacked feather or fin he was well-nigh as much at home upon the sea as were the feathered birds and finned sea creatures. So it was and had to be with all the Shetland haaf men.

* * *

In mid-July Peter Garriock and his men set forth for da gruns as usual, at the end of da helly, and set forth more than ever lightheartedly. In fine fettle they were that clear,

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bright dawning. They had come in on Saturday with a great catch, and now the weather augured well for another successful week. Moreover they had had good fun deriding the rancelman when he had tried to force them to da kirk. Peter Garriock himself had flung a stale haddock full in the rancelman's face. There had been muttering at that amongst the other haaf men, and even some talk of a trial; but Peter Garriock being a big powerful man even for Shetland, and his two sons also being stout, and the three other men stout also, it had ended in talk. Neither Peter Garriock nor his sons nor men cared a whit for anyone. Peter had sported with his wife over the helly. His men had sported with theirs. His sons had laughed into their sweethearts' eyes and had kissed them many times. Not a man of them all had so much as looked into da lodge or come nigh to da kirk at all. Not once had any one of them so much as whispered, "Loard open da mouth o' da gray fish!"

The wind was very light on that Monday dawn when Peter Garriock started for da gruns again. The sail flapped idly, so that he and his men must pull at the long oars. Only now and again did a light puff of wind come, and they were forced to row almost the full forty miles. No matter. Shetland dipped under the sea rim, and, rowing, they jested of the haddock that had struck the red-faced rancelman so squarely in his face. Another month, and it would be the time of Laurencemass. They talked of ale and of dancing and feasting. Gulls wheeled above their boat. They watched the sporting porpoise. The sun shone warm. But though warm the sun and strong their arms and though the time of Laurencemass was nigh, they talked in low voices and jested quietly. Very carefully they talked and jested, cautious lest they use any of the land words that the dreaded Aesir so detested. Pagans, they were, the six of them; and

pagan-like, they feared the Aesir and all other sea spirits mightily, though caring naught for da Loard.

It was not till well into the evening that Peter Garriock and his men shot their long lines with every hook well baited. Having shot them, they rested on the thwarts and ate meal and mutton and drank of their blaand. All was well. The sun had gone down from a sky without cloud into a sea upon which were nowhere any white horses. The horizon was clear and level on every hand. And now the bright stars were wakening one after another. The dreaded sea spirits were slumbering. Aye, sure it was that the Aesir was asleep in his cave deep down beneath the still water.

And then, sudden as the clapping of hands or the flinging wide of a door, the stars went out and whitecaps rose. The dark sea hissed angrily all about the boat, and harder and harder came the blasts of cold wind from the surrounding darkness. Sprays drove in whipping sheets across the boat, and no man in her could see the face of any other. Rain beat on Peter Garriock and his men. Rain changed to hail. Hail stung their faces, lashed their bare hands. Thunder rumbled. Lightning flared.

Hastily Peter Garriock and his men cut every line away. Hastily they fashioned a sea anchor—a triangle formed of three pieces of wood with a piece of strong canvas fastened over it and one end weighted. They dropped the sea anchor over the boat's bow and paid out the line, that her bow might be fetched up and held to face the wind and sea. All over da gruns for miles about Shetland other sixaern boats' crews were doing the same thing.

Forty miles from land Peter Garriock and his men fought for their lives against the Aesir's fury in the lightning-illuminated night, in the lashing spray, the beating hail,

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beneath the crashing thunder. And when by and by the lightning ceased, and the thunder died, they fought for their lives in utter darkness while the winged birds flying shoreward screamed above them, and the hissing sprays drove over them, and the sea tops lopped ever and again into their tossing boat. Such fish as had been caught they flung to the sea, that the boat might be lightened. Having done so they bailed. All night they bailed and, bailing their hardest, just managed to keep their boat from being swamped.

All through the next day Peter Garriock and his men bailed, while the Aesir raged. Sometimes they saw another sixaern boat drift by, bottom up. To some of the bottom-up boats clung men shouting to them for help. Powerless to help, they bailed.

Dark fell again, and, well-nigh worn out, Peter Garriock and his men bailed on into another night. At some time in that night the line that held the sea anchor parted. Then while in utter darkness the other four bailed harder than ever, two men took long oars and fought to hold the boat's head to the wind and sea, lest she come broadside on to the weather, and be swamped. From time to time the oarsmen and the bailers changed places. There was no rest for anyone. There was no time for any food, had any food been left. Mutton, meal, and blaand had long ago been washed to the sea.

Day came again at last. And now Peter Garriock and his men were too exhausted to bail or to row any longer. Yet bail and row they must or die. So they bailed and they rowed.

In mid-morning of that second day there appeared far off upwind, half-hid in the driving spume, a barque. Cease bailing the bailers dared not. Nor did the oarsmen dare lay down their oars. No man dared pause to try to attract the

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barque's attention. Bailing and pulling at the long oars they watched the barque draw closer, their weary faces white as her storm-whitened canvas. Did she not see them, hope was dead.

And then presently the barque was rushing past the boat, so close that the nigh oarsman must needs pull in his oar. Not till the boat was almost beneath her down-heeled lee side did those on the barque see her. Then ropes were flung in that haste that none but such throwers of rope as are bred upon the deep seas know. And six haaf men grasped the ropes, and leaped from the swamping boat, and were hauled hand-over-hand in a twinkling to the barque's rolling and water-swept deck.

Since she was a Russian vessel out from Riga no man aboard the barque could speak to Peter Garriock or his men in any tongue they knew. But there was at first no need for speech, for plain enough it was that those six half-drowned and nigh frozen haaf men must be fed ere any talk could be. Leaning upon the Russian sailors, they were guided below decks. Not till there was vodka in him could Peter Garriock find speech. With warmth in his belly then he rose and, gesticulating to the Russian captain, pointed away in that direction where Shetland lay. And in sign language the Russian captain answered Peter Garriock: "If the storm ceases soon I take you back there."

But that gale raged on for all the rest of the day and far into the night. And so it was that the Russian captain stood on upon his course for half-way round the world, leaving Shetland lost in the spume far astern.

* * *

In that great gale, which still to-day is spoken of about the Shetland coasts as "da July gale," there perished one hundred and five haaf men. Seventeen haaf boats were lost

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with all their crews. Some boats came in to the beaches with dead men lying stiff and stark amongst the slippery fish-scales on their bottom boards.

There was mourning in Federland, in Gloop, Unst, Uya, Norvik, Papa Stour, Aith, Gott, Whalsay, and Kullinsbroch. Much talk there was in Kullinsbroch of Peter Garriock and his sons and men, the haaf men discussing the boards that had been built into his new boat. Had any wise old seaman been sent for to sain her? And had she been launched for sure at high tide and at high noon? And had she by some mishap been launched widdershins instead of sungaets? The sole new boat she had been to go forth from Kullinsbroch that year. And the wise old seaman who had sained her vowed that truly she had been sained aright, and that in none of her boards had been any misforn knot, and that she had been launched at high tide and at high noon and launched sungaets also. And then while the rancelman spoke of the haddock that had been flung full in his face, and of how never once had Peter Garriock or any of his men so much as looked into da kirk, the haaf men of Kullinsbroch shook their heads, remembering the godlessness of Peter Garriock and his sons and his men.

Weeks passed into months, and, as the dead must ever be if the world is to roll on, the dead were put out of mind. Widows dried their eyes, and children who some day would grow to be haaf men or haaf men's wives played on the beaches again. The landlord-merchants ordered new boards from Norway, and wise old seamen were sent for to sain them. Once again there came the time of Beltane, and once more the haaf men, looking forward to another Laurence-mass, filed into the little kirk to ask da Loard for good fishing.

On the last Sabbath afternoon ere the haaf boats were to

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set forth the kirk at Kullinsbroch was well filled with haaf men. Save only they whose bones lay white upon the sea's bottom out on da gruns, each Kullinsbroch haaf man was there. Just within the door sat the rancelman. The day was cloudy with a chill wind and a chill rain falling, and the kirk door was closed. Now those within the kirk knelt, their heads bowed. Now they stood erect and in deep voices sang hymns to da Loard. And now they sat, their weather-lined faces turned to the minister in his little pulpit above them to the left of the chancel. At last the minister's voice died away. Silence fell. For a moment there was no sound in the kirk. And then at a gesture from the minister every haaf man rose to his feet. The minister's lips moved again. The lips of every haaf man, of every wife, and widow, and child moved. All together their voices rang out.

"Loard open da mouth o' da gray fish!" went up the prayer, so loud that for the moment the sounds of the gusty wind and of the rain that beat upon the little kirk were drowned.

Silence fell again, and for a moment ere they turned to go forth from the kirk each haaf man, each wife, each widow, each child stood still.

The rancelman turned to open the door of the kirk. But ere his hand could touch the iron handle the door opened, and a gust of the sea's cold wind blew in, bringing a spatter of chill rain with it.

The rancelman stood as though struck dumb. Each haaf man, each wife, each widow, each child stared open-eyed at the doorway.

In through the open door there walked Peter Garriock with bowed head. And at his heels walked his two sons, and at his sons' heels walked his three men. Slowly, with

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bowed heads, the rain dripping from them, their hats in their hands, they walked up the narrow aisle.

Come to beneath the pulpit Peter Garriock stopped, and his sons and his men stood still behind him. Lifting his face he looked up to the minister above him. His sons, his men, looked up to the minister.

Slowly the minister raised a hand, and slowly he made in the air the sign of the cross. Then bending a little toward Peter Garriock and his sons and men he spoke. And his words rang high and loud.

"Peter Garriock, where ha' ye been an' what ha' ye to say?" asked the minister.

Lost in the sound of the gusty wind and in the beat of the rain, the echo of the minister's voice died away. And as it died the voice of Peter Garriock was heard. Softly he spoke, at first, with humble eyes upon the face of the down-bending minister.

"We ha' been far an' we ha' seen much, minister," said Peter Garriock; and then his eyes left the face of the minister, and he looked up to and beyond the ceiling of the little kirk. And his next words came loud and high, ringing clear above the gusty wind and beating rain.

"Loard open da mouth o' da gray fish!"

NANCY HALE

The Earliest Dreams

THAT was long, long ago.

Your bed was maple, the colour of brown sugar, and upon the small round posts of it in the darkness some moonlight danced in the hush, in the quiet. Your mother had rustled away, far away, and bright and legendary, and your window stood open to the great stars and the wide dark snow. It was so quiet, and the air of the night and the snow came through the window and smelled so cold, so sweet, and of far-away sad promises. What was it you wanted so? From miles and miles away you heard a late train breathing across the countryside, hurrying distantly through the white winter night to the yellow lights and the little quiet towns. Its whistle blew, so far, far away, three times—Ah, Ah, Aaaah. . . . You longed for something, lying still between two smooth slices of sheet, but you could not think what it was, and now you will never know what it was.

Downstairs they were all laughing in the dining-room, and you could hear both the two sounds, the waves of cool mythical laughter underneath your room, and from the back of the house, coming up the back stairs, the comfortable low clatter in the kitchen. Bridie and Catherine, moving about

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in the hot yellow light in the kitchen, over the dry brown boards of the floor, between the white table and the sink, between the pantry with all the cups on hooks, the bags of flour and the crocks of potatoes and the jugs of molasses and vinegar that stood in a black cupboard under the marble slab, up a little creaking step to the stove. You thought of the stove, as black as your hat, with strange wonderful things to eat steaming in covered pots, and the piles of potatoes heating up on the shelf at the back. You could hear the footsteps heavy and busy across the old boards, and your heart caught in your throat when they opened the door to go in to wait on the dinner-party, and all the laughter came upstairs suddenly in a gust.

Outside the house a car drove by up the dark road, with a broken chain around its wheel, rapping upon the frozen snow as fast and muffled as a heart-beat, louder and louder, and the lights came in the window and ran along the wall until they came to the bed. For just a minute your bed was blue-white and bright, and then the lights scraped along the other wall, bobbing up and down along the pictures and over the book-case, and ran out of the window so fast. Far up the road the broken chain beat on the snow on the road, further and further, and then it was gone away. It was enormous, and still outside, deep in the breathing snow, with the stars a million miles deep in the high sky.

They were laughing downstairs. It ran like bells, like the wind running in and out among little bells, fewer and fewer and then all at once another and another until the bells were all tinkling and singing in different keys. You heard the important clatter of plates, fragile, impossible, fairy plates. What were they all laughing at? Something you knew nothing about, something beautiful and exalted. You wondered why they always laughed so much in the evenings

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after you had gone to bed. In the lovely evenings, in the pale candle-light shut in from the white night, they were all so beautiful downstairs in their dresses and their little coloured slippers. They knew about strange things, places, and shining people, great singers and dancers from Russia, balls in Vienna and cities in China, and they knew slender little jokes that nobody but they could understand. You never knew what they were laughing at when they laughed so long in the evenings.

* * *

You lay very still in your bed and listened to something, perhaps a dead leaf, perhaps a twig from the top of the house, fall with the gentlest pat upon the surface of the vast, murmurous snow. Forever, all over the round smooth world it was dark and still and beautifully cold, fatefully and eternally hushed; under you only was a house full of lights and the sound of people laughing. Lying there you felt yourself rising higher and higher into the dark sky where the stars shone; where the stars burned like heavenly secrets, high and coldly radiant.

You were suspended in a dark tower above the world. Planets and great winds, chimeras and islands lost under the sea, and archangels striding among the stars. And a great bell tolling.

You heard the peal of the front-door bell sing through the house, and someone opened a door and all the laughter came up to you in a clear sudden burst. And then they closed the door, somewhere, and the sound clapped shut, and you could hear them laughing faintly, far away.

You thought about the little animals in the woods beyond the snow, the rabbits packed together in warm clusters in holes, and little mice among the roots of trees. You thought about the unheard fall of cold leaves at intervals, among the

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trees upon the drifted snow. You thought of the silent woods, where there were no lights and no sound, with perhaps the infinitely small track of an animal running momentarily under the trees in the dark. Beyond lay the meadows rolling over the hills, with the moon shining blank white and pure upon the snow, with the wind sliding like a skimmer over the crust, and the great stars in the sky above the world.

You held the pillow up to your face and fitted it to your cheek, and lay still in the room you knew so well. You alone were alive in this still, unbelievable world, in your own room with its long window. The moonlight lay along the glass of the pictures and across the bookcase, and you thought about the books in their shelves and the three white chairs and the black table and your desk, all ranged in the darkness around you.

* * *

Then downstairs someone began to play the piano, and you listened to the muted music. What was it that you did not know about? what was it that you wanted? You knew there was something that the music had known and wept for, something that was over and could never be forgotten, but for you it had never been begun. You felt so sad, so happy and so sad, because something that was all the beauty and the tears in the world was over, that something lovely was lost and could only be remembered, and still you knew that for you the thing had not yet started. Perhaps you were sad for the regret you knew you would feel some day for this sadness. The music was bitter and sweet and sorrowfully reckless, very fast and resigned and gay in a minor key. You wondered what it was that had made the music so sad, that made you so sad.

Then they stopped playing and it was all still again. The moon moved as slow as a cloud into the frame of your

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window, and stood still in the sky outside, and you lay in your bed in the dark and watched the moon. Outdoors the quiet snow and the sky beat like a pulse, and then you heard a leaf scrambling across the crust of the snow, scratching minutely with fingers of wire; it slid, and ceased.

They were all laughing in the drawing-room below. You wondered what they were laughing at, that made the laughter sound so wise, so gay, so confident and foreign. You never knew what things they laughed at when they laughed so long in the evenings, and now you never will know.

V. S. PRITCHETT

The Two Brothers

THE two brothers went to Ballady to look at the house. It was ruinous but cheap, there were miles of bog and mountain alive with birds, there was the sea and not a soul living within two miles of it. As had always happened in their childhood and as had repeatedly happened since the war when "the Yank" had returned to the Old Country to look after his sick brother, "the Yank," with his voracious health, had his way.

"Sure it's ideal," said the Yank.

The time was the spring.

"We'll take it for six months," he exclaimed.

"And after that?" asked Charlie, watching him like a woman for plans and motives he had not got.

"Och, we'll see. We'll see. Sure what's the use of worrying about the future?" said the Yank.

He knew and Charlie knew the question hung over them; the future watching them like an eagle on a rock, waiting to shadow them with its wing. In six months he would be left alone. He knew how the Yank, his brother, dealt with time. Out came his gun and he took a pot shot at it, went after it, destroyed it and then laughed at his own skill and forgot.

In the sky and land at Ballady there was the rugged wildness

of farewell. This was the end of the land, prostrating itself in rags before the Atlantic. The wind stripped the soil so that there was no full-grown tree upon it, and rocks stood out like gravestones in the bigoted little fields. A few black cattle grazed, a few fields of oats were grown, the rest was mountain and the wide empty pans of bog broken into eyes of water. The house lay in a hollow out of sight of the sea, which was only half a mile away. It was a grey, rambling place of two storeys with outhouses and stables all going to pieces. It was damp, leaky and neglected and barely furnished. There were fuchsia bushes growing right up to the windows, beating against them and blinding them in the gales, pressed close as people in the night. The garden was feet deep in grasses, the gravel drive had become two grass ruts, and for a gate there was an iron hurdle propped against a gap in the stone wall. From the hill above Ballady Charlie and Micky had made out its slate roof silvery in the light, the ribs of the roofless stable, the whole place like a shining skeleton.

"The way it is," the Yank explained when he went in to Ballady alone for a drink now and then. "The poor bloody brother he's after having a breakdown." The Yank was a wild, tall, lean, muscular fellow, straight and springy as a whip, with eyes like dark pools, with bald brows, lips loose and thin, and large ears protruding from his bony skull. His black hair stood up straight and was cropped close like a convict's, so that the skin could be seen through it; his nose was straight and his face was reddened by the wind. He went about with a cigarette in the corner of lips askew in a conquering grin, and carried a gun all day. A breezy, sporting chap. Day after day he wandered up and down the bog and the fields or lay in the dunes waiting; then, bang went his gun, the sea-birds screamed over the sand and up he got from his knees to pick up a rabbit or a bird. The sun burned

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him, the wind cut him, the squalls pitted him like shot. He had no secrets from anyone. Fifteen years of Canada, he told them, four years of war and now for a good time while his money lasted. Then, he said publicly to all, he would go back. All he wanted now was a bit of rough country, a couple of drinks, and a gun; and he had got them. It was what he had always wanted. He was out for the time of his life.

How different Charlie was, slight and wiry, nervous and private as a silvery fish. His hair was fair, almost white, and his eyes were a keen dark blue in the pupils and a fairer blue was ringed round them. His features were sharp and he kept his lips together and his head down as he walked, glancing nervously about him. He looked like a man walking in his thoughts. If, when he returned from the sea, he saw someone in his path, he dodged away and made a long detour back to the house. If taken by surprise and obliged to talk to a stranger, he edged away murmuring something. His voice was quiet, his look shrill, pleading and shy. He was absorbed in the most private of all pieties, the piety of fear to which his imagination devoted a rich and vivid ritual.

He did not badger his brother with speech. He followed him about the house, standing near him, asking with his eyes for the virtue of his brother's strength, courage, company and protection. He asked no more than his physical presence and to watch. In the mornings at first, after they had established themselves in the house, there was always this situation: Micky restless, burning to be out with his gun and Charlie's eyes silently asking him not to go. Micky bursting to be free, Charlie worrying to hold him. Sometimes Micky would be melted by an unguarded glance at his brother. For a moment he would forget his own strength and find himself moved by an awed tenderness for this clever man who had

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passed examinations, stayed in the Old Country, worked his way up in a bank and then, when the guns had started to popple, and "the troubles" began, had collapsed.

Then Micky was kind and humoured him. They would sit for hours together in the house, with the spring growing in the world outside, while Charlie cajoled him with memories of their boyhood together, or listened to Micky's naïve and boasting tales of travel. In those hours Charlie forgot the awful years, or he would have the illusion of forgetting. For the two surrounded themselves with walls of talk, and Charlie, crouching round the little camp fire of his heart, used every means to keep the talk going, to preserve this picture of life standing as still as a dreamy ship in haven and himself again a child.

But soon the sun would strike through the window and the fairness of the sky would make Micky restless. He would lead his brother, by a pretext, into the garden and slyly get him to work there, planting lettuces or digging, and when he had got him to work he would slip away, pick up his gun and be off to the dunes.

Shortly after moving into the house Micky went into Dill, got drunk as was his habit, and returned with a dog, a young black retriever very strong, affectionate and lively. He did not know why he had bought it and could hardly remember what he had paid for it. But when he got home he said on the impulse to Charlie :

"Here, Charlie boy. I've bought you a dog. One of the priest's pups."

Charlie smiled slightly and looked in wonder.

"There y'are, man," Micky cried. "Your dog."

"Hup! Go to your master," said Micky, giving the dog a push and sent it over to Charlie, who still incredulously gazed.

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"Now that's kind of you," he murmured, flushing slightly. He was speechless with pleasure. Micky, who had given the animal to his brother on the spur of the moment, was now delighted with himself, sunned in his generosity.

"Sure now ye've got yer dog," Micky kept saying, "ye'll be all right. Ye'll be all right now ye've got the dog."

Charlie gazed at Micky and the animal, and slyly he smiled to himself: Micky had done this, as he was always doing reckless things, to salve his conscience. But he put these thoughts aside.

Both brothers devoted themselves to the retriever, Micky going out and shooting rabbits for it, and Charlie cooking them and taking out the bones. But when Micky got up and took his gun and the retriever jumped up to go out with him, Charlie would whistle the dog back and say:

"Here! Stay here. Lie down. Ye're going out with me in a minute."

It was his dog.

At last Charlie went out and the watchful creature leaped out with him. Charlie drew courage from it as it loped along before him, sniffing at walls and standing stiff with ears cocked to see the sudden rise of a bird. Charlie talked to it in a low running murmur hardly made of words but easing to the mind. When it stopped he would pass his clever hands over its velvety nose and glossy head, feeling the strange life ripple under the hair and obtaining a curious strength from the tumult. Then he would press on and whistle the creature after him and make across the fields to the long finger bone of rock that ran down to the sea; but as the retriever ran it paused often, as Charlie began to note with bewilderment and then with dread, to listen for Micky's voice or the sound of his gun.

When he saw this Charlie redoubled his efforts to win the

whole allegiance of the dog. Power was renewing itself in him. And so he taught the dog a trick. He called it over the rocks, slipping and yelping, to the sea's edge. Here the sand was white, and as the worlds of clouds bowled over the sky to the mountains where the light brimmed like golden bees, the sea would change into deep jade halls, purple where the weeds lay and royal blue under the sparkling sun, and the air was sinewy and strong. Charlie took off his clothes and, shivering at the sight of his own thin pale body, his loose queasy stomach and the fair sickly hairs now picking up gold from the light, and with a desire to cleanse himself of sickness and fear, lowered himself cautiously into the green water, and wading out with beating heart called to the dog. It stood up whining and barking for a while, running up and down the rock, and at last plunging in pursuit. Then the man caught hold of its tail and let himself be towed out to sea, and for minutes they would travel out and out until, at a word, the dog returned, snorting, heart pumping, shoulders working and eyes gazing upwards and the green water swilling off its back until it had pulled Charlie back into his depth.

Then he would sit drying himself and listening to the scream of the birds while the black retriever yelped and shivered at his side. And if Micky were late for his meal when he returned, through drinking with the schoolmaster or going away for the day to the races, Charlie would say nothing. He would build up a big turf fire in the empty room and wait with the dog at his side, murmuring to it.

But it took Charlie hours to make up his mind to these expeditions, and as time went on they became irregular. There were days when the absences of his brother left him alone with his fears, and on these days he would helplessly see the dog run after Micky and go off with him. Soon it would hardly obey Charlie's call.

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"You're taking the dog from me," Charlie complained.

"Sure if ye'd go out the dog 'd follow you," said Micky. "Dammit, what's the use of staying inside? I don't want the dog, but the poor bloody creature needs a run an't follows me. It's only natural."

"Natural. That's it," Charlie reflected. From him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath. But he cried out sharply :

"Sure you have it trained away from me."

Then they quarrelled, and Micky, thinking his head was getting too hot for his tongue, went out to the dunes and stood in the wind staring at the sea. Why was he tied to this weak and fretful man? For three years since the end of the war he had looked after Charlie, getting him out of hospital and into a nursing home, then to houses in the country, sacrificing a lot of his own desire to have a good time before he returned to Canada, in order to get his brother back to health. But Micky's money would not last for ever; soon he would have to go, and then what would happen?

But when he returned with cooler head, the problem carelessly thrown off, he was kind to his brother. They sat in eased silence before the fire, the dog dreaming at their feet, and to Charlie there returned the calm of the world. His jealousies, his suspicions, his reproaches, all the spies sent out by his reconnoitring fears, were called in and with Micky he was at peace and no shadow of the future was on him.

Yet as the months climbed higher out of July into August and swung there awhile, enchanted by their own halcyon weather, before declining into the cooler days, the question had to be faced. Micky knew and Charlie knew, but each wished the other to speak.

It was Micky who, without warning, became impatient and spoke out.

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"Lookut here, Charlie," he said one evening as he washed blood off his hands in the kitchen—he had been skinning and cleaning a couple of rabbits—"are you coming back to Canada with me in September?"

"To Canada is it?" said the brother, putting his thin fingers on the table and speaking in a gasping whisper. He stood incredulous. Yet he had expected this.

"And leave me here alone!"

"Not at all," said Micky. "I said, 'You're coming with me.' You heard me. Will ye come with me to Canada?"

Charlie drew down his lips and his eyes were restless with agony.

"Sure, Micky, ye know I can't do that," he said.

"But what's to stop ye? Ye're all right. Ye're well. Ye've got your bit of pension and ye'll be as comfortable as in your own home. Get out of this damn country, that's what ye want. Sure 'tis no good at all except for old people and children," cried Micky.

But Charlie was looking out of the window towards the mountains. To go out into the world, to sit in trains with men, to sleep in houses with them, to stand bewildered, elbowed and shouldered by men in a new country! Or, as the alternative, to stay alone without Micky, left to his memories.

"You'll not leave me, Micky boy," he stammered in panic.

Micky was bewildered by the high febrile voice, the thin body shivering like a featherless bird. Then Charlie changed. He hunched his shoulders, narrowing himself and cowering round his heart, hardening himself against the world, and his eyes shot out suspicions; jealousies, reproaches, the weapons of a sharp mind.

"'Tis the schoolmaster has been putting you against me," he said.

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Micky ridiculed the idea.

"Ye knew as well as I did, dammit, when we took the place, that I'd been going now," he said. Yes, this was true, Charlie had known it.

Micky took the matter to his friend the schoolmaster. He was a stout, hard-drinking old man with a shock of curly grey hair. His manner was theatrical and abrupt.

"'Tis the poor bloody brother," Micky said. "What am I to do with him at all?"

"Ye've no more money," said the schoolmaster.

"Ye've been with him for years," he went on. He paused again.

"Ye can't live on him."

"And he must live with you."

He glowered at Micky and then his fierce look died away.

"Sure there's nothing you can do. Nothing at all," said the schoolmaster.

Micky filled their glasses again.

He continued his life. The summer glided down like a beautiful bird scooping the light. The peasants stood in their long shadows in the fields and fishermen left their boats for the harvest. Micky was sad to be leaving this beautiful isolation.

But he had to return to the question. He and Charlie began to argue it continually day and night. Sometimes Charlie was almost acquiescent, but at last always retired within himself. Since he could not sit in the safety of the old talk, his cleverness found what comfort it could for him in the new. Soon it was clear to Micky that Charlie encouraged the discussion, cunningly played with it, tortured him with vacillations, cunningly played on his conscience. But to Charlie it seemed that he was struggling to make his brother aware of him fully: deep in the piety of his fear he saw in Micky a

man who had never worshipped at its icy altars. He must be made to know. So the struggle wavered until one night it came out loudly into the open.

"God Almighty," cried out Micky as they sat in the lamp-light. "If you'd been in France you'd have had something to cry about. That's what's wrong with this bloody country. All a pack of damn cowards, and ye can see it in their faces when they stare at you like a lot of bleating sheep."

"Oh, is that it?" said Charlie, gripping the arms of his chair. "Is that what you're thinking all these years? Ye're saying I'm afraid, is it? You're saying I'm a coward. Is that what you were thinking when you came home like a red lord out of hell in your uniform, pretending to be glad to see me and the home? But thinking in your own heart I'm a coward not to be in the British army. Oh, is that it?"

His voice was quiet, high and monotonous in calculated contrast to Micky's shocking anger. But his body shook. A wound had been opened. He *was* a coward. He *was* afraid. He was terrified. But his clever mind quickly closed the wound. He was a man of peace. He desired to kill no one. He worshipped the great peace of God. This was why he had avoided factions, agreed with all sides, kept out of politics and withdrawn closer and closer into himself. At times it had seemed to him that the only place left in the world for the peace of God was in his own small heart.

And what had Micky done? In the middle of the war he had come home, the Destroyer. In five minutes by a few reckless words in the drink shop and streets of the town he had ruined the equilibrium Charlie had tended for years and had at last attained. In five minutes Charlie had become committed. He was no longer "Mr. Lough the manager," a man of peace. No, he was the brother of "that bloody pro-British Yank." Men were boycotted for having brothers in

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the British army, they were threatened, they were even shot. In an hour a village as innocent-looking as a green-and-white place in a postcard had become a place of windows hollow-eyed with evil vigils. Within a month he had received the first note threatening his life.

"'Twas yourself," said Charlie—discovering at last his enemy. "'Twas yourself, Micky, that brought all this upon me. Would I be sick and destroyed if you hadn't come back?"

"Cripes," said Micky, hearing the argument for the first time and pained by this madness in his brother. "Cripes, man, an' what was the rest of ye up to? Serving God Almighty like a lot of choir boys, shooting up some poor lonely policeman from a hedge and driving old women out of their homes."

"Stop it," shouted Charlie, as the memories broke upon him, and put his fingers to his ears.

Micky threw his cigarette into the fire and took his brother by the shoulder in compassion. He was sorry for having spoken so; but Charlie ignored him. He spoke, armouring himself.

"So it's a coward I am, is it!" he said. "Well, I stayed when they threatened me and I'll stay again. You're thinking I'm a coward." He was resolute. But behind the shrubs brushing against the window, in the spaces between the cool September stars, were the fears.

There was nothing else for it. Charlie watched Micky preparing to go, indifferent and resigned, feeding his courage on this new picture of his brother. He turned to it as to a secret revelation. Micky was no longer his brother. He was the Destroyer, the Prince of this World, the man of darkness. Micky, surprised that his good intentions were foiled, gave notice to the landlord, to force Charlie. Charlie renewed the

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agreement. He spoke little; he took no notice of the dog, which had now completely deserted him. When Micky had gone it would be his. Charlie kicked it once or twice as if to remind it. He gave up swimming in the sea. He was staying here. He had all the years of his life to swim in the sea.

Micky countered this by open neglect of his brother. He entered upon a life of wilder enjoyment. He gave every act the quality of a reckless farewell. He was out all day and half the night. In Ballady he drank the schoolmaster weeping under the table and came staggering home, roaring like an opera, and was up at dawn, no worse for it, after the duck.

"This is a rotten old wall," Micky said in the garden one day, and started pushing the stones off the top of it. A sign it was his wall no longer. He chopped a chair up for firewood. He ceased to make his bed. He took a dozen empty whisky bottles, and standing them at the end of the kitchen garden, used them as shooting targets. He shot three rabbits and threw two of them into the sea. He burned some old clothes, tore up his letters and gave away a haversack to the fisherman and a second gun to the schoolmaster. A careless enjoyment of destruction seized him. Charlie watched it, saying nothing. The Destroyer.

One evening as the yellow sun flared in the pools left by the tide on the sand, Micky came upon Charlie.

"Not a damn thing," Micky said, tapping his gun.

But as they stood there, some gulls which had been flying over the rocks came inland and one fine fellow flew out and circled over their heads, its taut wings deep blue in the shadow as it swung round. Micky suddenly raised his gun and fired and, before the echoes had broken in the rocks, the wings collapsed and the bird dropped warm and dead.

"God Almighty, man," cried Charlie, turning away with nausea, "is nothing sacred to ye?"

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"It's no damned good," grinned Micky, picking up the bird by the wing, which squeaked open like a fan. "Let the fish have it." And he flung it into the sea. This was what he thought of wings.

Then with a week to go, without thinking he struck a bad blow. He went off to Dill to say good-bye to the boys, and the retriever followed him although Charlie called it back. The races were on at Dill, but Micky spent most of the time in the pubs telling everyone he was going back to Canada. A man hearing this said he'd change dogs with him. His dog, he said, was a spaniel. He hadn't it with him but he'd bring it down next fair. Micky was enthusiastic.

"I know ye will," said Micky. "Sure ye'll bring it."

"Ah, well now," said the man. "I will bring it."

"'Tis a great country the west," said Micky. "Will ye have another!"

"I will," said the man, and as he drank: "In the three countries there is not a place like this."

Micky returned the next day jubilant without the dog.

"Where's the dog?" said Charlie suspiciously.

"Och, sure," began Micky evasively, realising for the first time what he had done. "D'you see the way it is, there is a man in Dill——"

"Ye've sold it. Ye've sold my dog," Charlie shouted out, rushing at his brother. His shout was the more unnerving because he had spoken so little for days. Micky drew back.

"Ah now, Charlie, be reasonable now. Sure you never did anything for the dog. You never took it out. You didn't care for it——"

Charlie gripped a chair and painfully sat down, laying his head on his hands on the table.

"You brought the war on me, you smash me up, you take the only things I have and leave me stripped and alone," he

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moaned. "Oh, God in heaven," he half sobbed in pleading voice, "will ye give me gentleness and peace!"

Now the dog was gone Charlie sat still. He would not move from the house, nor even from the sitting-room except to go to bed. He would scarcely speak. Sulking, Micky repeated to his uneasy conscience, sulking, sulking. He's either mad or he's sulking. What could he do? They sat estranged, already far apart, impatient for the act of departure.

When the eve of his departure came Micky was relieved to see that Charlie accepted it, and was even making it easy; and so touched was Micky by this that he found no difficulty in promising to spend that last night with Charlie alone. He remained in the house all day, and when night came a misted moonlight gleamed on the cold roof and the sea was as quiet as the licking of a cat's tongue. Charlie drew the curtains, made up the fire and there they sat silently listening to the clock. They were almost happy: Charlie pleased to have this final brief authority over Micky; Micky relieved by the calm, both disinterested. Charlie spoke of his plans, the work he would do in the garden, the furniture he would buy, the girl he would get in to cook and clean.

"'Twould be a fine place to bring a bride to," said Micky, giving Charlie a wink, and Charlie smiled.

But presently they heard footsteps on the drive.

"What's that?" exclaimed Charlie sharply, sitting up. The mild mask of peace left his face like a light, and his face set hard.

Without knocking at the door, in walked the schoolmaster. He was in the room before Charlie could get out. He stood up and retreated to the corner.

"Good evening to ye," said the schoolmaster, pulling a bottle out of his pocket, and spreading himself on to a seat. "I came to see your brother on his last night."

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Charlie drew in his lips and gazed at the schoolmaster.

"Will ye have a drink?" said Micky nervously.

That began it. Gradually Micky forgot his promise. He paid no attention to Charlie's signs. They sat drinking and telling stories. The world span round. The alarm clock on the little bamboo table, the only table in the bare room, ticked on. Charlie waited in misery, his eyes craving his brother, whose bloodshot eyes were merry with drinking and laughter at the schoolmaster's tales. The man's vehement voice shook the house. He told of the priest at Dill who squared the jockeys and some long thick stories about some Archbishop and his so-called niece. The air to Charlie became profane.

"Isn't your wife afraid to be up and alone this time of night?" Charlie ventured once.

"Och, man, she's in bed long ago," shouted the schoolmaster. "She is that."

And Micky roared with laughter.

At two o'clock Charlie went to bed and left him to it. But he was awake at five when Micky stumbled into his room.

"Before God, man," Micky said, "I'm bloody sorry, Charlie man. Couldn't turn out a friend."

"It's too late now," said Charlie.

Micky left at seven to catch a man who would give him a lift to the eight-o'clock train.

* * *

The autumn gales broke loose upon the land a month after Micky's departure and the nights streamed black and loud. The days were cold and fog prowled over the sea. The fuchsias were blown back and the under leaves blew up like silver hands. The rain lashed on the windows like gravel. There were days of calm and then the low week-long mist covered the earth, obliterating the mountains, melting all

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shapes. All day long the moisture dripped from the sheds and windows and glistened on the stone walls.

At first Charlie did not change. Forced to go to the village for supplies, he would appear there two or three times a week, saying little and walking away from the village quickly. A fisherman would call and the post-boy lingered. Letters came from Micky. He took little heed of all this. But as the weather became wilder he hung curtains over the windows day and night and brought his bed down to the sitting-room. He locked the doors upstairs, those that had still keys to them. He cooked on the sitting-room fire. He was narrowing his world, making a smaller and closer circle to live in. And as it grew smaller, the stranger the places beyond its boundaries seemed. He was startled to go into the empty kitchen, and looked with apprehension up the carpetless stairs to the empty landing where water dripped through the fanlight and was already staining the ceiling below. He lay awake in the night as the fire glowed in the room.

One morning when he found the inanimate noises of his isolation supportable no longer, he put on his hat and coat and packed his things and walked out of the house. He would stay no longer. But with his fear his brain had, as always, developed a covering cunning. He went up the lane to see if anyone was coming first. He wanted to be away from people, yet among them; with them, yet alone. And on this morning the Ballady sailor was reloading a load of turf that had fallen off his cart. Charlie returned into the house. He took off his hat and coat. He had not been out for a week because of this dread.

There was still food in tins for a few days. It was the thought that he could last if he liked, that he could keep the world off, that made him satisfied. No letters came now. Micky no longer wrote; effusive in the first weeks, his letters

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had become rare. Now there had been no news for a month. Charlie scarcely thought of him.

But when late in December the mists held the country finally, the twigs creaked on the drive like footsteps and the dark bushes divided in the wind as if they had been parted by hidden hands, he cowered into his beating heart, eating little, and the memories began to move and creep in his head. A letter threatened him with death. He drove alone with the bank's money. At Carragh-cross road the signpost stood emptily gesticulating like some frightened speaker with the wind driving back the words into his mouth, and the two roads dangling from its foot. He knew what had happened at Carragh-cross road. He knew what had been found there lying with one leg out of the ditch. He saw it. And Micky, the Destroyer, with his convict's head and his big red ears, shooting down the Holy Ghost like a beautiful bird, grinned there blowing smoke down his nose.

These memories came and went. When they came they beat into his head like wings, and though he fought them off with white prayers, they beat down and down on him and he cried out fast to the unanswering house :

"God give me peace," he prayed. "Holy Mother of God, give me peace for the sake of thy sweet Son——"

When the beating wings went his cleverness took possession of him again. He prepared a little food, and once or twice walked around the garden within the shelter of the walls. The ground was frozen, the air still and a lace of snow was on the paths. But if the days passed in peace, his heart quickened at the early darkness, and when the turf smoke blew back down the chimney it was as if someone had blown down a signal. One night he had a terrible dream. He was dead, he had been caught at last on the road at Carragh-cross. "Here's the man with the pro-British brother," they cried

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and threw him into a bog pool, sinking deeper and deeper into soft and sucking fires that drew him down and down. He was in hell. And there in the flames and calling to him was a woman with dark hair and with pale insects walking over her skin. It was the schoolmaster's wife. "And he thinking you were in bed," said Charlie, amazed by the justice of revenge. He woke up gasping in the glow of the sitting-room fire, and feeling that a load was still pressing down on his chest.

In the morning the dream was still in his mind; mingling with some obscure sense of triumph it ceased to be a dream and became reality. It became like a new landscape imposed upon the world. The voice of the woman was more real to his ear than his own breathing.

He felt free, was protected and cleansed, and his dream seemed to him like an impervious world within a world, a mirage in which he musically walked. In the afternoon he was exalted. He walked out of the house and taking the long way round by the lanes went to the schoolmaster's. The frost still held and the air was windless, the land fixed and without colour. As it happened the schoolmaster had taken it into his head to go as far as his gate.

"Man, I'm glad to see ye about," cried the schoolmaster at the sight of Charlie. "I meant to see ye. Come in now. Come in. 'Tis terrible lonely for you in that place."

Charlie stood still and looked icily through him.

"Ye thought she was in bed," he said. "But I'm after seeing her in the flames of hell fire."

Without another word he walked away. The schoolmaster was bewildered, then made a rush for him. But Charlie had nimbly climbed the stone wall and had dropped into the field opposite.

"Come here. Come back. What's that you say?"

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called the schoolmaster. But Charlie walked on, gathering speed as he dropped behind the hill out of sight going to his house. Then he ran for his life.

The schoolmaster did not wait. He went in for his coat, bicycled into Ballady Post Office and rang up the Guards at Dill.

"There's a poor feller here might do harm to himself," he said. "Will you send someone down?"

But on the way back to the house Charlie's accompanying dream and its dazed exaltation left him. Speaking had dissolved it. It lifted like a haze and suddenly he was left alone, exposed, vulnerable in the middle of the fields. He began to run, shying at every corner, and when he got to the house he clawed at the door and ran in gasping to throw himself on the bed. He lay there on his face, his eyes closed. There had been brief excitement in the run, but as he recovered his breath the place resumed its normal aspect and its horror became real as slowly he turned over and opened his eyes to it. And now they were open he could not close them again. They stared and stared. Slowly it came to him there was nothing in life left for him but emptiness. Career gone, peace gone, God gone, Micky gone, dog—all he had ever had, trooped with bleak salute of valediction through his mind. He was left standing in the emptiness of himself. And then a shadow was cast upon the emptiness; looking up he saw the cold wing of a great and hovering bird. So well he knew it that in this last moment his mind cleared and he had no fear. "'Tis yourself, Micky, has me destroyed," he said. He took out a razor and became absorbed in the difficulty of cutting his throat. He was not quite dead when the Guards broke in and found him.

The Anniversary

MRS. PEACOCK woke with a start, and opening wide her lids revealed a pair of true blue eyes. All she knew in this first second of waking was that her heart fluttered. . . . Why, what was it—Stephen, had she forgotten to call Stephen? She raised herself on one elbow and looked over her shoulder, only to find the other half of the big four-post bed vacated. “Goodness gracious, Stephen up already,” she murmured, sitting up hurriedly and tossing the gold locks back from her small pink ears. Through the open window came the unmistakable tick-tack . . . tick-tack . . . of a scythe being sharpened, the sound thinning as the tip was reached: there was a pause—and the blade began its crisp rhythmic cutting. . . .

The tense expression on Mrs. Peacock’s face vanished. She reached up behind her head and took a small gold-faced watch from its crimson velvet pocket which was embroidered so prettily with seed pearls. “Only half-past five,” she said with a yawn. It was now, as she fingered the watch, that she was reminded of her wedding anniversary. She had been married five years to-day—four months less than Queen Victoria. The watch had been Mr. Peacock’s wedding

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present, and, since it was his gift, he was fearful of her overwinding it; so every night he wound it up himself, saying with a self-complacent wag of his head: "Tut! women have no feeling for mechanism." His wife, however, took this as a delicate compliment.

Mrs. Peacock slipped the watch back, arranged the fine hemstitched sheet with her small well-shaped hands, and settled herself again in the pillows. A natural calm took possession of her face, but now and then a trace of sadness intruded across her eyes which clouded and cleared with the thoughts that came and went to the accompanying sounds of scythe and early morning bird notes.

On fine summer mornings Mr. Peacock was often up at dawn, working in the garden which was his pride: this, however, was trying to his temper, which was peppery and blustering, making Mrs. Peacock's heart flutter, but she, thinking it a man's prerogative, never complained. For five years Mr. Peacock had fumed and petted his wife according to his humour, while she saw that his house was beautifully kept, and arranged the little dinners that pleased him; and she allowed no garment ever to be placed in his wardrobe without the necessary stitch or button.

They had no children—Mrs. Peacock did not know why, but sometimes thought it might be the fault of her husband. She never spoke of this to anyone; and when it made her too utterly miserable she would calm herself by deciding it was the will of God; when, straightway, she would go into the garden to admire the herbaceous border and inhale the scent of flowers; or, if in winter, she would go upstairs, count the linen and see if all the lavender bags were properly distributed.

Mrs. Peacock believed she was happy—anything else was unthinkable—except on the occasions when she counted the

linen unnecessarily, or had to rush into the garden to gaze at the flowers, her hands so tightly clasped behind her back that her knuckles looked like large ivory beads, while murmuring under her breath: "It is the will of God."

A gentle rap on the door roused Mrs. Peacock. "Dear me, how fast the time has gone. Fie—a whole hour day-dreaming," she admonished herself.

"One moment, Hannah," she called in a soft low voice as she whisked a turquoise-blue jacket off the end of the bed and slipped it on; then a close-fitting cap under which she poked every curl she could catch in her hurry. "You may come in now, Hannah," she called again.

In rustled Hannah, her cotton frock so stiffly starched that it stood out without the aid of hoops. She carried a huge can of hot water, as if it were a mere nothing, and placed it silently on the floor.

"Good morning, ma'am," said Hannah, lifting a pair of thickly lashed black eyes which she quickly lowered again. At the same time she flashed her white teeth in a bewitching smile, only, the next moment, to bring her red lips softly together in solemn repose. Thus did this lithe young creature make and unmake her every action.

The girl has the manner of a beautiful spaniel, thought Mrs. Peacock, as she watched Hannah disappear behind the screen and come out quickly again, bowling a large circular bath which she lowered on to the drugget with a drumming sound.

"Is there anything more that you wish me to do, ma'am?" asked Hannah, her hands folded and her cheeks flushing.

"Yes, if you please, Hannah, draw the curtains a little across the window and, tell me, can you see how much mowing your master's done?"

Hannah drew the curtain and rose on tip-toe.

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“Why! the master have all but finished, ma’am,” she exclaimed with a half-smiling bite on her lower lip.

Regardless now of the girl’s presence, Mrs. Peacock leapt out of bed, saying with agitation: “And I not up yet. Run, child! and set the breakfast. Whatever you do, don’t let the coffee boil. I’ll come and grill the ham myself—but have everything in readiness. Oh, and, Hannah,” she beckoned the girl back and in a slightly confidential tone said: “Give Robert a reminder—to be sure there is not any dust in Janet’s coat—you know the least thing puts Mr. Peacock out when he has been up early. The heat is very trying,” she added half excusingly.

Hannah’s face flashed acquiescence and she was gone.

Mrs. Peacock turned the key. Then stooping she dipped her fingers in the water. Her bath was a real joy to her and had to be exactly right. She flung off her jacket and cap and pulled the ribbon of her nightgown, which fell like a ring of snow at her feet. For a moment she stood—miraculously, like a goddess; then she stepped into the bath with a splash. With the great sponge she showered herself all over, lifting first one arm then the other as a dove lifts its wings in summer rain, quivering with joy as each drop falls on its small soft feathers. She no longer belonged to any age—she, Charlotte Peacock, did not exist.

Clatter . . . clatter . . . downstairs all the doors banged one after the other, and a high-pitched male voice threw out questions and orders, interspersed with impudent adjectives, to which Hannah was replying: “Yes, sir; no, sir, the mistress is having her bath, sir.”

“Bath be damned; bring me my shaving water, and mind it’s hot. Has that son of a gun, Robert——?” But Hannah cut short this insolent sally by interrupting quickly:

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"Yes, I hear Robert a-hissing to the curry-comb—Robert's been here this hour, sir."

"Pshaw! Tell the young Jackanapes from me, if he curry-combed as much as he hissed I'd be less likely to arrive at Somerset House looking as if I'd come from a slate quarry.—Wants a colonel with a white kid glove to show him what's what, damn 'im." The resounding blow of a nose echoed through the house, and the next moment the dressing-room door slammed.

With the first clatter of doors Mrs. Peacock jumped out of her bath—she scarcely dried herself so great was her hurry. Swiftly she pulled open the drawers of the tall-boy, and slipped on garment after garment, tying tapes and buttoning buttons with quick nervous fingers. "How provoking of Stephen to be so previous this morning," she thought as she did up at least twenty fastenings from neck to waist of her dress (it was Mrs. Peacock's custom to have a new dress every year on her wedding anniversary), and this, a small green-and-white checked silk, trimmed with loopings of ribbon, was very becoming, she thought, as she took two steps back from the long swing mirror. The crinoline was distinctly larger than anything she had ever had before—was it a trifle bold?—would Stephen think it too conspicuous? But she must not stop for such considerations now. She deftly twisted a pair of golden curls on either side of her face and hurried from the room.

A smell of grilled ham soon permeated the house; there was a clatter of plates, and a parrot screamed at intervals, in crude imitation of Mrs. Peacock's voice, "Hannah, your master's ready."

Mrs. Peacock was already seated at the table when her husband came fussily into the room, threatening, with mock seriousness, to ring that idiot bird's neck one of these days. This threat he made almost every morning, though the manner

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and tone varied, indicating to his wife whether breakfast would be fair or stormy.

Mrs. Peacock smiled blandly at her husband.

"Well, my wife, and how's my wife this morning?" was Mr. Peacock's response as he gave a downward jerk to his white waistcoat and a pull to his cuffs. Then he walked over to the mirror, looked at himself, and tightened his black bow under the small chin which was dominated by an exceedingly large bony nose.

"How do you like my new gown?" said Mrs. Peacock. And having drawn his attention she swung round on her toes, finishing up with a curtsy.

"Very smart, my dear, very smart; but why so voluminous?" He stood with arms folded and head thrown back quizzically.

"'Tis the fashion, Mr. Peacock."

"H'm, I don't mind the fashion," he said, with a smirking compression of his lips, "but nothing more, I hope, nothing more," he added with a nod.

Fortunately Mrs. Peacock's innocence saved her from her husband's cruel insinuation, and she sat down relieved that her gown was not disapproved.

"Why, bless my soul, of course, it's our wedding day." Mr. Peacock clapped his hands together. . . . "That means duck and green peas to-night, my dear, and a bottle of sherry. Ah, let me see; it will be the last of the half-dozen. Well, well, it can't be helped—come and give your husband a kiss, my pet," he said, with a mixture of abandonment and indulgence. He picked up his coat tails with a flourish, and as he sat down, arms and legs thrust out, he had the ridiculous appearance of a young hawk waiting for a parent to feed him.

Mrs. Peacock got up, leant across the table and touched his forehead lightly with her lips.

"D'you call that a kiss?" said Mr. Peacock, catching her face with both his hands and holding her lips hard to his. . . . She saw only his great nose. Terrific, she thought, and with a feeling of suffocation closed her eyes.

At last she disengaged herself.

"Come, Stephen, your breakfast will be cold," she said breathlessly.

Presently, viewing her husband more distantly, from her place opposite, she musingly continued to herself: "After all a large nose does give a man a strong appearance. He has keen eyes. His hair—perhaps a trifle thin on the temples, but that adds nobility to his brow. And the whiskers are certainly very smart. But, his mouth—'tis a pity moustaches are not the vogue. The blue coat and light trousers have decided style—yes, certainly an elegant figure." Thus, Mrs. Peacock disowned the ugly thought of a moment ago.

"Oh, Stephen," she said, seeing her husband take out his watch and get up from the table, "I was going to say, will it suit you to dine at seven o'clock instead of eight this evening? Hannah has just told me that her young man has been ordered off to India: she has asked for permission to stay the night at her sister's in Woolwich. He leaves, it seems, first thing in the morning."

Mr. Peacock looked at his watch again for a moment, intently, before answering:

"Why, yes, Charlotte my pet, whatever you please; your affair, you always settle everything," and clearing his throat he started to whistle in an inane tuneless fashion.

Mrs. Peacock fingered her long gold chain nervously. "I was thinking," she said tentatively, in a voice of uncertain pitch, "that it would be pleasant to invite Sarah and Henry this evening for our anniversary. . . ."

Mr. Peacock swung round.

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"What . . . pu . . . !" he spluttered. "A packet of women ! I know Sarah, with her 'thank you, Stephen, I'll take a wing——' before she's even been asked. As for Henry, holding forth with his rubbishy stuff—and—and drinking my sherry. No, I don't mind what you do, but . . ."

"Please, Stephen, don't agitate yourself, I pray—we'll not ask them," broke in Mrs. Peacock, and she lowered her face to hide her trembling lip, while Mr. Peacock noisily took a pinch of snuff. So the storm abated.

The gig was at the door. Mrs. Peacock helped her husband on with his light grey caped overcoat, and handed him his tall silk hat. He put it on with a slight tilt, patted her cheeks, and, with a few facetious remarks to Robert, he jumped into the gig.

"Let the mare have her head," he shouted, flicking the whip over Janet's head. "Bye-bye, my wife."

Janet threw up her head and started off in fine rampant style.

Mrs. Peacock was still fluttering her little white handkerchief, her other hand held up to shade her eyes from the sun, when she saw the gig come to a standstill—so sharp was the pull-up that Janet reared on her hind legs—while out of the side entrance Hannah ran with something in her hand. "Ah, Stephen must have forgotten his gloves—what a blessing the girl is," said Mrs. Peacock to herself, as she watched her husband start off again with his usual showy dash through the gateway and out on to the Old Dover Road.

She listened to the sharp clank of hoofs till they died away : as one might listen at the play, after the curtain has fallen, for the chief actor to return ; but on hearing the scene shifters instead, one sits back with relaxed attention. In this frame of mind Mrs. Peacock re-entered the house,

URSULA RIDDLE

thinking what a mercy that Stephen was neither parson nor doctor—to have the curtain, as it were, rising and falling all day.

And now for her own affairs. First into the drawing-room—the venetian blinds were down and no harm could come to the carpet. She gave a touch here and a setting to rights there as she passed on her way to the conservatory. And while she stood, enjoying the warm scented atmosphere, a ruby and sapphire ray from the coloured glass was thrown across her bodice, like the ribbon of a grand order. As she moved from plant to plant, tending them, her mind reverted to how disagreeable Stephen had been about Sarah and Henry. He had never been quite like that about them. True, he always called Henry an old woman, and Sarah argumentative—usually she left Stephen to suggest the invitations. What should she do? for had she not already spoken to Sarah—practically invited them. “Too vexing,” said Mrs. Peacock, half aloud, and she plucked some yellow leaves off the red geranium which was trained against the wall, from floor to roof, of the conservatory. Finally, with a last look at her favourite cyclamen, she decided to walk over, after lunch, to her darling Sarah’s and make some excuse for the evening. But now the store cupboard and other things needed her attention. So the morning passed.

The afternoon spent with her sister went all too quickly. There had been no difficulty in explaining about the dinner—Sarah had understood at once—she was always sympathetic. Afterwards they had talked endlessly about their family, so beloved by both. How they shrieked and screamed with laughter—Sarah was such a wit.

And now Mrs. Peacock had to hurry home against time, so anxious was she to be back before Stephen. To answer the why and wherefore of her errand would be too galling, she

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thought as she fell into a trot. No one would see her between these high hedges—and if they did, what of it?

It was half-past six when she arrived home, breathless and flushed; but to her great relief Stephen's hat was not on the hall table.

"Is your master not in yet, Hannah?" she inquired, at the kitchen door, to make doubly sure.

"No, ma'am," came the reply, through the sound of sizzling duck which Hannah was basting.

"Then, Hannah, dinner precisely at seven, and you are not to stop a minute after the dinner is served, or you will be late for the carrier. I will see to everything else myself. You quite understand?" and Mrs. Peacock held up her finger with playful severity.

"Yes, thank you, ma'am," replied Hannah, whose cheeks were the colour of fire, and she dropped her lids as she spoke.

"Dear, dear, how scorched your face is, child," said Mrs. Peacock with concern. To which Hannah only opened her eyes wide and bit her lip.

"Naughty girl," said the parrot, suddenly, in a soothing tone of voice.

"There you are," said Mrs. Peacock, with a nod and a laugh as she shut the kitchen door.

"Hannah, your master's ready!" screamed the parrot, bobbing up and down on her perch.

"Oh! you fool!" cried Hannah with a jump, and snatching up the kitchen table-cloth she threw it over the cage.

"There, that'll teach you—scaring the life out of a girl like that," she said angrily. Then with the corner of her apron she wiped her face while muttering to herself.

When Mrs. Peacock came downstairs after taking off her bonnet and shawl, the hall clock pointed to ten minutes to seven—she would just peep into the dining-room and see

that the table was properly laid—no cause for irritation, she thought, holding up a wineglass to the light—especially on their anniversary.

The clock on the chimney-piece struck seven. . . . Evidently Stephen was going to be late. Perhaps he had forgotten dinner was to be early—very odd for such a punctilious man, reflected Mrs. Peacock. In any case Hannah must go, and she gave the bell a decisive pull so that it was still jingling when Hannah appeared.

"I fear your master has forgotten the time, so get on your things and go—I will dish up the dinner myself," she said, taking another glance at the clock.

"Thank you, ma'am, but are you sure——?" the girl began, with an equivocal look.

"Perfectly sure," replied Mrs. Peacock firmly. "Off with you." She waved her hand and smiled reassuringly.

. . . Hannah had gone. Eight o'clock came—the dinner spoiling. Mrs. Peacock was getting fidgety. Now Robert was at the door asking for orders—should he wait, or was he to go home for his tea and come back later? Dear, dear, she didn't know what to say: whatever she did would doubtless be wrong.

"Yes, you had better go, Robert. . . . No, don't come back, your master will unharness Janet himself. That will be best," she said, but with a feeling of uncertainty.

"Very good, ma'am," said Robert. He stood turning his cap over in his hands as if unwilling to go. "Excuse me, ma'am," he continued, fixing her with a pair of squinting eyes, "you're not a-worrying, are you, ma'am? The master, he can handle a 'oss better 'an anyone for miles round. I'll guarantee you ain't got no need to worry—anyways not on that score," he added with a sly knowing look.

"Thank you, Robert; that will do, you may go now."

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There was an edge of stiffness in Mrs. Peacock's voice. The man's smooth tongue was not to her taste.

"Very good, ma'am, good-night." A slightly shame-faced look came over Robert, and he slouched off.

Now alone Mrs. Peacock's anxiety increased. She turned over in her mind every possible thing that might have happened, dismissing each in turn. She hovered between the garden and the kitchen, fitfully doing things she would not have done in a less anxious frame of mind.

It was nearly nine o'clock, and really, could there have been an accident? She walked to the stable and back to the gate. —Ah, there was a sound of hoofs. . . . No, it was the mail-cart. Should she stop it and ask the post-boy if he had seen anything of Mr. Peacock on the road—or would Stephen say she had made a fool of him?—one never knew. But it would relieve her. Yes—no—yes. Ah, too late, he had gone past.

Wearily Mrs. Peacock went back into the house. The duck was decidedly dried up, in fact the dinner was spoilt. She tried to divert her attention with a book, but it was useless, and after much hesitation she decided to have her dinner. With the first mouthful her throat ached and she found it impossible to swallow. Two large tears splashed into her plate. Miserably she got up from the table and paced the room, again and again. As it grew dark, fancies ran riot in her mind; she heard creaks in the hall and up the stairs. Apprehensively she bolted the outside doors, thinking she would run and unfasten them the minute Janet's hoofs clanked in the yard. She wished she had told Robert to come back—he could have borrowed Jimmy Webb's pony and cart. Now she had not the nerve to go and find him; besides, the whole village was asleep by this time—it was past ten o'clock.

Eleven struck. . . .

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Twelve. . . Still she paced to and fro, from dining-room to hall, listening and quaking; till, unable to bear it any longer, she threw herself on the couch and sobbed and sobbed, not knowing whether she loved or hated this man. At last, exhausted, sleep overcame her, and she lay like a lovely flower dropped by some careless person.

In a frenzy of nightmare she woke—in her dream she had been running desperately with someone, whose heels clinked like steel, chasing hard behind her. . . . Panting she got to the door, which shut in her face as she reached it, and seizing the knocker she banged with all her might—but it made no sound. . . . Help! she screamed, for the knocker was transformed, in her hand, into Mr. Peacock's nose——

She sat up dazed. "Heavens! someone was really knocking—Stephen!" In a flash Mrs. Peacock was on her feet. As she rushed across the room she had an instantaneous vision of black diagonal stripes upon the white table-cloth, and the cold unwanted meal. Thus sunrise made itself known to her through the venetian blinds.

Mrs. Peacock threw herself at the door, drew the bolts feverishly, and flung it wide.

"Stephen! my dear, has there been an accident—what has happened?" she asked with agitated concern as Mr. Peacock pushed past her.

"Stephen . . ." her voice trembled. But Mr. Peacock hung up his hat and coat in silence.

"I must know. I implore you to tell me," she said, wringing her hands in supplicating anguish.

"Never ask me questions," snapped Mr. Peacock, and he walked upstairs without another word.

Mrs. Peacock stood speechless while she watched his retreating figure. For the first time in her life she felt the flames of rage possess her with no reserve of tears to quench

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them. Madly she rushed into the drawing-room. To smash and destroy was her desire; and there, gently tinkling in the draught, beckoning, calling, tempting, was the chandelier. With a wild leap she caught the glittering crystals. . . . But she as suddenly realised, in that agonised moment, the degrading futility of wrecking the lovely thing. Horrified by her passion she covered her face with her hands and sank trembling to the floor—the chandelier still tinkled sweetly. . . .

Presently Mrs. Peacock got up and walked from the room to the foot of the stairs. Her shoulders heaved in a heavy sigh, and she slowly mounted the winding staircase. At the top she paused, and again her shoulders lifted with a great sigh. Then she tiptoed along the corridor, opened the door of her room gradually and slipped in without a sound. The room was in darkness, with the curtains still drawn for the night, and Mr. Peacock was breathing deeply, sound asleep.

Mrs. Peacock quickly undressed, and groping her way found the bed-post. “It has to be, so better now,” she said to herself, knowing, if she waited for the night with all the day between, her nerve might break. “It is best when thrown from one’s horse to mount again immediately,” she continued, in the same urging strain, as she stealthily got into bed. Then she lay down rigid on the utmost edge, and vowed that never, never, would she ask Stephen another question as long as she lived.

*Granella's House*¹

A MOUSE, if it walks into a trap, doesn't know it for a trap. If it knew, it would certainly avoid it. And even when trapped it doesn't know it, but scuttles madly up and down the cage, squealing and squeaking in anguish, poking its whiskered little nose through the bars, looking desperately for a way to get out.

The man who consults a lawyer knows quite well that he is walking into a trap; and he doesn't struggle. The mouse struggles; the man stays quiet. Quiet, that is, with his body. Inside—that is, with his soul—he behaves like the mouse, only worse.

In the lawyer Zummo's ante-room, one sweltering morning in August, this, exactly, was the condition of his clients, crowded together in that small space, fixed motionless on their chairs, perspiring, exasperated, eaten alive by the flies and the boredom.

Each client seemed to hate the others, for each would have liked the lawyer to himself, for his own litigation exclusively. How could one know, with all those difficult cases to handle, with that frightful heat of 90° in the shade, with the endless

¹ Translated from the Italian by Joan Redfern.

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interruptions and comings and goings, that Zummo, when at last he attended to him personally, would still have his mind clear and on the spot?

Writing at a table was a clerk. With shirt and collar unbuttoned and a handkerchief stuffed beneath his chin, he was copying notes at frantic speed. Each time he glanced at the clock three or four clients would shuffle their feet. Many, drooping from the long wait, stared absently at the bookcase, stuffed with dusty volumes of litigations and procedures, the scourge and ruin of so many families. Others, to distract their thoughts, peered through the green shutters of the windows, watching the lucky people in the street, walking about, free and careless, whilst they—Phew! . . . and with a furious gesture they would flick the flies off their foreheads.

But a worse torment even than the flies was the lawyer's little boy—an odious, impudent brat of about eight or nine, who had slipped from his own quarters into the ante-room, to cheer up papa's clients.

"What's your name? Vincenzo? Oh, what an ugly name! What's that thing on your watch-chain? A locket? Why, it's got hair in it! Whose hair is it? What d'you keep it for?"

Then, hearing that papa was on the move, and was probably piloting some rich client to the door, he would dive suddenly between the legs of the clerk, to vanish beneath the table. At sight of the lawyer the clients would rise in a block and look at him beseechingly. But Zummo, throwing up his hands, would say: "Patience, gentlemen, one at a time." The client whose turn it was would follow him obsequiously, shutting the door behind him. The others would return to their waiting, more hot, more tired, more exasperated than ever.

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Three clients only, who seemed to be husband, wife and daughter, showed not the slightest sign of impatience. They sat, almost without sign of life, silent, abstracted, sunk in some gloomy, some dreadful, secret distress. The husband, a man in the sixties, dressed in a suit too large for him, that exhaled a smell of naphthalene, had the mournful appearance of a mute at a funeral. To match his suit he had a greenish, ruffled top-hat, of a by-gone shape, which he kept glued to his head, presumably out of deference to the solemn occasion. He could hardly do less, he thought, considering he was calling on a lawyer.

But he was not perspiring.

Pale and cadaverous, he appeared to be bloodless. His jaw and cheeks seemed to have gone mouldy, because of a layer of greyish fur that served him as a beard. His eyes of lightest blue had a squint, and were set very close to a massive wedge of a nose. He sat doubled, with bent head, as if crushed by some intolerable load. His thin, diaphanous hands rested on a stick.

His wife, beside him, was a startling contrast. Stout and thriving, with a high, pronounced bust, she had a look, somehow, of spirit—of flashing stupidity. From her red, rather hairy face, stared a pair of magnificent eyes, black like coals. Just now they were fixed on the ceiling.

The daughter had the same seedy look as the father, and the same squint. Sitting hunched on her chair, she looked like a dwarf. Father and daughter appeared ready to fall to the ground, and seemed only prevented by the stout woman between them, who in some mysterious fashion seemed to hold them up.

They awakened the most intense curiosity, touched with a certain repugnance, although, poor things, they had already ceded their turn to at least four or five clients, allowing it to

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be understood that they would wait till the very end, as their talk with the lawyer would require such a long, long time—be very, very long—and extremely serious.

Whatever could have happened to them? What frightful misfortune could be crushing them? Had murder or crime found them out at last? Were they threatened with some cruel exposure? Or merely by poverty?

Poverty? Well, hardly that—at least to judge by appearances. The stout wife was loaded with gold: gold earrings dangled from her ears; a double chain in gold squeezed her neck; a locket in gold went up and down on her bosom that was heaving like a noisy bellows; a gold chain secured her fan; and her stumpy fingers were stiff with rings.

From time to time she would use her fan, but almost at once would let it fall into her lap, and with eyes fixed on the ceiling would be plunged in thought.

Once only did one of them speak—when the man leaned forward to his daughter, and said:

“Tinina! . . . remember the thimble!”

Even the lawyer's brat would have none of them. Several clients had pushed him towards them, egging him on to torment them. But the child, repelled by their gloom and misery, had refused to play up; he had pulled a face and turned his back on them.

At last the room had emptied, except for the three. The clients had all dispersed, more or less satisfied, and the boy had gone. But the trio sat on. The clerk, seeing them there, like statues, said irritably:

“Well, what's up? Why don't you go in?”

“Oh,” said the man, rising to his feet, as did also the two women. “May we?”

“Of course you may,” said the clerk with a snort. “You ought to have gone at once. Hurry up, the lawyer lunches

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at twelve, and it's now a quarter to. Oh, excuse me—your name?"

The man at last uncovered his head, and uncovered at the same time the torture that terrible topper had been causing him. From his red, smoking cranium came rivers of sweat, bathing his pale, possessed face. Bending forward, he breathed his name:

"Serafino Piccirilli."

* * *

The lawyer was tidying up his desk, preparatory to leaving. He imagined that he had finished for the day. Suddenly he was faced by these three clients, utterly unknown to him.

"Good morning," he said, with a bad grace.

"Serafino Piccirilli," breathed the man again, bowing profoundly, while the two women dropped curtseys to the ground.

"Sit down, sit down," said the lawyer, staring astonished at these strange clients. "It's late, I've got to go."

The three sat in a row, facing the desk. They were fearfully embarrassed. Piccirilli smiled timidly—a smile that seemed to hurt: who knows when that man had laughed for the last time!

"Sir," he began.

"We have come——" broke in the daughter.

"Staggering things!——" puffed the wife, her eyes on the ceiling.

"Excuse me," said Zummo, frowning. "Will one of you speak for the rest, and as briefly as you can? What, please, is your business?"

"Well, it's like this," began the man with a gulp; "we have been served with a writ——"

"Ah-h! . . . the br-r-ute! the assassin! . . ." broke in the wife.

"Please, Mamma," said the daughter nervously.

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"Maria, please let me speak," said the man with as much show of authority as his miserable physique permitted. "Yes, sir," he continued, "a writ. We had been forced to leave the house we were occupying——"

"I see. An order to quit——"

"Oh, no—no, no, not at all!" said Piccirilli. "It was just the contrary. We paid our rent most regularly—in fact, in advance. It was we who left—and the proprietor objected. And now he is claiming damages, for breach of contract, and also for defaming the house—for giving it a bad name——"

"But how?—how?" said Zummo, his face darkening. "You left the house against the proprietor's wish, you gave it a bad name, and the proprietor . . . I don't understand. You must speak plainly. A lawyer, you know, is like a priest. . . . Was it—ahem!—was it—some illicit commerce?——"

"Oh, no, sir, no!" said the man hurriedly. "Commerce? No, nothing of the kind. We're not in business. Except that my wife, just now and then . . . lends just a trifle of money—privately, in a small way, but honestly——"

"I see. At a reasonable rate——"

"Yes, believe me, sir, most reasonable—even with the consent of Holy Church. . . . But that's nothing to do with it—it's something quite different. The proprietor of that house, a man called Granella, says that we have defamed it, because, in the three months we were there, in that dreadful house, we saw such strange things. . . . I get—I get the shivers even to think of them——"

"The escape and liberation of all the creatures of Hell!" breathed the wife with an immense sigh, rising to her feet and throwing up her arms, and, with a hand loaded with rings, making the sign of the cross.

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"Persecution, persecution," muttered the daughter, through tight lips, staring at the floor. "Sit down, Mamma."

"Persecution! Yes, persecution's the word," took up the father. "Sit down, Maria."

"Persecution by *whom*?" yelled the lawyer, at last losing patience.

Piccirilli leaned towards the desk, put a hand to his mouth, while with the other he signed to the women to keep quiet (Ssh! . . .). Quietly and distinctly he said:

"By ghosts!" . . .

"By *whom*?" said the lawyer, thinking he had heard wrong.

"GHOSTS!" said the wife very loudly and courageously, waving her arms.

The lawyer jumped to his feet and exploded furiously:

"Get out! You—you make me laugh! Persecuted by ghosts! . . . Look here, I'm hungry, I want my lunch——"

"But Granella has served us with a writ," moaned the man, wringing his hands, almost crying.

"Quite right too," shouted Zummo in his face.

"For shame, sir, for shame!" said the wife, pushing the others back and standing up to him. "Is *this* how you treat unfortunate people who have come to you for help? Yes, we have indeed been persecuted. If you had seen what we have seen, you wouldn't talk like that. There *are* ghosts—there are indeed! And no one knows it better than we."

"Oh, so you've really seen them?" sneered the lawyer.

"I've seen them with my own eyes," said the man.

"And I, with mine," added the daughter.

"Ah, yes, very likely with yours," cried Zummo, pointing with his fingers to their squints.

"Then what about mine?" screamed the wife, opening

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her splendid eyes very wide, and beating her breast. "By the grace of God my eyes are straight. Ay, and they're fine and big, sir! And I swear that I've seen those ghosts as clearly as I see you now."

"You have, have you?" said Zummo, mockingly.

"Oh, all right," sighed the woman. "I see you don't believe us. But, you know, we have witnesses. The people in our neighbourhood would all give evidence."

The lawyer frowned, very thoughtful:

"You could bring witnesses, you say? People who have actually seen them?"

"Seen *and* heard them. Yes, sir."

"But seen? . . . seen? . . . *what* have they seen? Give an instance," said the lawyer angrily.

"Well, chairs. Chairs hopping and skipping about the room, without anyone touching them——"

"Chairs?"

"Yes, sir. Chairs. Going head-over-heels round the room like little boys in the street. And then . . . well; there was a pin-cushion—a yellow velvet pin-cushion shaped like an orange, that Tinina made me. This pin-cushion would leap suddenly from the dressing-table right into the face of my poor husband, as if thrown by an invisible hand. Oh, and then the wardrobe—the wardrobe with the mirror. It would suddenly tremble and squeak as though it had a fit; while from inside . . . inside the wardrobe . . . (my flesh creeps when I remember it!) would come shouts of laughter——"

"Shouts of laughter!" said the daughter.

"Shouts of laughter!" said the husband.

But the wife, having got in her wedge, hurried on:

"The people in our neighbourhood, as I said before, would all give evidence. They have seen these things too."

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More, oh ever so much more than I have told you. Sir, when you know what we have seen and heard——”

“Tinina! . . . the thimble!” broke in the husband at this point.

“Sir,” began Tinina with a sigh, collecting herself, “I have a little thimble, in silver, a present from my dear old grandmother (God rest her soul!). I am terribly fond of this thimble. Well, one day it disappeared. I hunted for it everywhere, but couldn’t find it. For three whole days I hunted for it. Then, one night, as I was lying under my mosquito net——”

“That accursed house has mosquitoes too,” broke in the mother.

“I heard,” continued the daughter, “I heard a noise as though something were jumping up and down on the roof of the net——”

Her father here interrupted her with a gesture; it was evidently a concerted piece, and his turn had come:

“Like a rubber ball, when one bounces it on the ground and it comes back into one’s hand——”

“Then suddenly,” continued the daughter, “this thing (my thimble) jumped violently right against the ceiling, then fell to the ground—dented!”

“Dented!” said the father.

“Dented!” said the mother.

“I got out of bed, all of a tremble, to pick it up, and just as I was bending to reach it, from the ceiling came——”

“Shouts, shouts, shouts of laughter!” ended the mother.

The lawyer was thinking deeply, with his head bent, and his hands behind his back. Then, pulling himself together, he said, with a nervous little laugh:

“Playful ghosts, eh? . . . Go on, go on, I’m amused.”

“Playful? . . . Oh, no, not playful. Infernal, you mean.

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Ghosts that snatched the sheets off our beds, that sat on our stomachs when we slept, that clapped us on the shoulders, that rang our bells in the night, as if (God save us!) there were an earthquake! Is *that* your idea of playful? But when we told Granella, d'you know what he answered us? 'Try a diet of good beefsteak. Cure your nerves.' We begged him to come and investigate, but he refused. In fact, he threatened us. 'Kick up a row,' he said, 'and I'll do for you.' Yes! Just like that."

"And he *has* done for us," added the husband bitterly. "And now, sir, we are in your hands. You can trust us. We are respectable people, we'll meet our obligations."

The lawyer, as usual, pretended not to catch this last. He was standing, deep in thought, tugging at his moustache. He looked at the clock. It was nearly one. His lunch had been waiting nearly an hour. At last he spoke:

"You'll understand," he said, "that I don't accept your ghosts—no, not for a moment. They're all imagination. But I'm ready to consider the case—from a legal point of view. You say you have seen . . . hum! . . . that anyway you have seen something, and you say you have witnesses. So far, so good. You say you had to leave the house because . . . hum . . . because of that curious . . . er . . . persecution. The case would be novel—and is certainly plausible. But before I undertake it, I must study and examine it. Well, now it's late, and I must go to lunch. If you call on me to-morrow morning I'll give you your answer. Will that do?"

* * *

But the lawyer, whether consciously or not, had already undertaken it. The case had gripped him—had stirred his imagination; it was turning and turning in his head like a windmill; it left him no peace. At lunch he couldn't eat;

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after lunch, when he lay on his bed for a nap, as was his habit in summer, he couldn't get to sleep.

"Ghosts!" he repeated from time to time, smiling derisively, picturing those comic Piccirillis, who swore (or forswore) that they had seen them.

As a child he had been terrified of ghosts. Well he remembered the anguish that had tightened his poor little heart as he lay awake at night cowering under the bedclothes.

"The soul!" he sighed, stretching up his arms beneath the mosquito net, and letting them fall back on the bed, heavily. "The soul . . . the immortal soul! . . ." Yes, to believe in ghosts one must believe in survival—one must believe in the immortality of the soul. Now, did he believe it, or didn't he? He had always thought that he didn't. And yet, perhaps . . . there was a doubt—it would be better to admit a doubt. One often was dishonest with oneself, as one was with others. The fact is, he'd been afraid of these questions. People were afraid to explore their hearts, to examine their intimate thoughts; they were afraid of discovering something they hadn't bargained for. And life was so absorbing; one's work, one's habits, the small daily events of one's existence prevented one's thinking of the soul. And yet, what subject more interesting, more enthralling? Did a friend die, one thought of him as dead, and that was all; one stopped before the fact of his death like a jibbing animal; one preferred to think of his life, to recall some memory. And that was all. Science, too, stopped short at death, as if death didn't exist. And now he had got to reckon with ghosts. "You objected to thinking about death," they said. "Well, here we are, from the kingdom of the dead, and you've got to be bothered with us; you've got to think about death. What's more, my excellent lawyer, we've put you in an awkward hole as a lawyer, and

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shall have put some unfortunate judges in a fix too, when you bring your case and they are forced to give a verdict on ghosts!" . . .

Jumping from his bed with excitement, Zummo went back to his study, to search in the Civil Code.

Two articles only seemed to offer some basis for the litigation: Articles 1575 and 1577.

The first laid down:

- "(1) The lessor must assign the residence to the lessee;
- (2) The lessor must maintain the said residence in a condition suited to the use of the lessee;
- (3) The lessor must guarantee to the lessee a peaceful enjoyment of the said residence for the whole period of his tenancy."

The other laid down:

"The lessee must be guaranteed against all faults or nuisances that could prevent his occupying the said residence, whether the lessor was aware of them or not at the time of the agreement. Further, if the lessee shall suffer loss from the said faults or nuisances, the lessor shall pay him damages, unless he can prove that he was unaware of them at the time of the agreement."

But—and here was the crux—if his case were to rest on these two articles, there was nothing for it but to prove that there really were ghosts in that house. He must prove that ghosts existed.

He had statements, and he had witnesses; but to what extent were these statements and witnesses reliable? And how would science explain those phenomena?

On the following day he questioned Piccirilli minutely, and got together the witnesses he cited. He accepted the case, and at once went to work on it with ardour.

His first step was to read a handbook on spiritualism, from

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its origins in mythology down to the present day; next he studied Jacolliot on the wonders of Fakirism; next he devoured wholesale everything published by the greatest and most renowned experimentators, from Crookes to Wagner, from Gibier to Koellner, to Janet, to Richet, to Morselli; and found, to his intense stupefaction, that these serious and sceptical and positive scientists declared explicitly that they had no doubt whatsoever about the reality of psychic phenomena.

He sprang to his feet, lit by a sudden fervour: "Ah! now, *now*! Well, things are looking a bit different!" So long as these phenomena had been spoken of by nobodies, by little, comic people like the Piccirillis, he, a serious man, grounded in positive science, had only laughed at them. If he had seen them himself he would still have thought them hallucinations. But now that he knew them to be accepted by eminent scientists, such as Richet and Lombroso—well, the thing looked different.

Forgetting the Piccirillis, forgetting his work, his clients, forgetting everything but the new ardour that possessed him, he gave himself up entirely to the study of spiritualism. At last he had found the faith he'd been hungering for—the food for his soul, the outlet for his energies! Could the great problem of death be resolved? Could the soul of a person who had died come back for an instant to "materialise"? Could it speak to him (Zummo) who till now had been blind? Could it say to him: "Zummo, be at peace! Cease to worry about this petty existence on earth; there's a far more splendid life waiting for you hereafter. Have courage! Go forward! . . ."

But meanwhile it was Piccirilli who was always coming back; now with his wife, now with Tinina. He came, in fact, every single day, to beg, to implore him . . .

"But I tell you I'm studying, I'm studying the case,"

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said the lawyer irritably. "Now for goodness' sake leave me in peace. I'm working hard at it. Don't be afraid, I've not forgotten you."

But, to tell the truth, he *had* forgotten them—he had forgotten everyone. He put off studying their case, and his other cases too, and he turned away clients. At last, out of gratitude to the poor Piccirillis, who had unconsciously pointed him to the way of light, he did sit down to examine their case.

At the very outset he was met by a grave difficulty. In all séances and experiments he had read of, there had always been a "medium." Then, one of the Piccirillis must of course be a medium. But if one of them was a medium, then the nuisance of the ghosts in Granello's house was not integral to the house, but was caused by the tenants—and the whole case went to bits. Yet if one of the Piccirillis was a medium without knowing it, then the same manifestations would have taken place in their former houses, and in the one they were occupying at present. Yet nothing of the kind had occurred before or since.

So, to get at the truth—so much more important to the lawyer than the mere case of the Piccirillis—he decided to hold a séance in their new house.

At first they refused flatly. But the lawyer insisted that the test was essential to their case. A séance was held, and it was found at once that Tinina was a powerful medium. Zummo, convulsed, scared out of his life, yet blissful, with his heart bursting and his hair on end, was a witness of all—or of nearly all—the amazing manifestations he had read about in his books. What matter that his case was collapsing before his eyes—what did anything matter? Here, great God! was the revelation—the revelation of the immortal soul!

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To the Piccirillis, their lawyer had simply gone mad. The immortal soul? What of it? Of course the soul was immortal. Who had ever doubted it? Good, practising Catholics, they had never realised that anyone doubted it. A séance to them was an infernal practice, nothing more nor less. They attended because their lawyer forced them. They begged, they implored him, with tears in their eyes, to keep the séances a secret, never, never to let news of them leak out. . . .

“Oh, all right, all right,” said the lawyer contemptuously. “What d’you take me for? For a new-born babe? Now don’t you worry. When your case comes on, never fear, I shall do my duty. I’ll sustain the occult nuisance of the house.”

And he did, in fact, sustain it—but without conviction; convinced as he was by now that Tinina was a medium. But he amazed the public, the judges and lawyers, with an intense and unexpected profession of faith in spiritualism. He called it the new religion of humanity, he declared that the Great Mystery had unlocked its doors, which to-morrow would be opened wide. Shadows, dim, uncertain, and frightening, were creeping through that half-opened door, to reveal the world beyond the grave—strange lights, strange shadows. . . . And here, with high drama and eloquence, he proceeded to speak of the marvels of spiritualism, the extraordinary manifestations, controlled, attested and accepted by all the finest intellects of the world of science—by physicists, chemists, physiologists, anthropologists, neurologists. . . .

The public listened enthralled. But the judges, unfortunately, found it difficult to breathe on those sublime heights. With irritating presumption they laid down that theories deduced from spirit phenomena were not as yet

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accepted by modern science. And in regard to Article 1575, how could the lessor of a house guarantee it against spirits, which were wandering and incorporeal entities? And as for Article 1577, how could a ghost constitute a nuisance that could prevent the lessee occupying the house? Could ghosts be defined as incumbrances. And even if they were, what remedy could the lessor use against them? And so, without more ado, judgment was awarded to the plaintiff, with damages and costs.

To the public, the verdict was highly unpopular. Zummo let forth such a flood of indignation that he was nearly arrested. In his fury he pointed to the poor Piccirillis as martyrs of the new religion, and the three were cheered hysterically by the crowd.

But Granella was filled with malign joy.

He was a large, red-faced man, stout and blustering. Laughing loudly, with his hands thrust into his pockets, he proclaimed to whomsoever it might interest, that he would sleep that night in the haunted house—alone! Yes, alone; because the servant he had had for twenty years had refused to come with him. She would serve him, she said, in a hovel, even in a cave—but not in that house. This was the good turn those scoundrels, the Piccirillis, had done him. For all that house was worth to him now they might as well have pulled it to the ground. But at least he would show the town that the verdict was just—that the court was right in condemning them to damages and costs. There! he'd show them! . . . He'd sleep in that house himself—and alone. He'd go and take a look at those ghosts, he would. . . .

* * *

Granella's house was built on a hill, at the highest point of the town, near an old city gate, whose Arabian name, meaning "The Gate of the Winds," had been strangely corrupted by

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the people to "*Bibirria*." The house was situated just beyond this gate, and it stood alone, on a rough, open space. Near it was a ruined shed, with a warped, unhinged door, where now and again some carter would shelter for the night, while keeping an eye on his mule and cart. The space was lit by a tiny petroleum lamp, which on moonless nights provided a feeble glimmer.

Granella had done his best for the house. He had re-varnished, papered and painted it; he had spared no expense. In vain. Not a soul would take it. Visitors flocked to it from curiosity, but no one took it. Granella, remembering the sums he had spent on it, would nearly weep from rage and vexation.

Well, to-night he would sleep in it. And alone. He had boasted that he would, and was determined to do it. He had already furnished a room very roughly—with an iron bedstead, a cupboard, a washing-stand and a chair; and when evening came he swaggered round the neighbourhood, to show himself off.

The neighbours noticed that he was armed with a pistol.

His red face was still shining from his loud laughter and derision in court. And yet, somehow . . . there was a queer little feeling in his stomach. . . . Curse that chattering lawyer and his speeches!

Ugh! it was amazing! The number of people—sensible, respectable people—who had caught fire from that swaggering Zummo! How stupid they were, how cowardly! Yes, even the judges! One of them, hot on the verdict, had accosted Zummo in the lobby, and had admitted—yes, sir, *admitted*—that even he had been shaken, in fact had believed for years that there was something in it! But when the lawyer had turned on him infuriated, he had shrugged his shoulders: "My dear fellow," he had said, "you'll understand . . . in the present state of opinion . . ."

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In fact, the lawyer's speech had got home. The whole town had been profoundly impressed by it. And poor Granella felt lonely—lonely and disgruntled, as though his friends had all let him down, like cowards.

Having paraded the neighbourhood, he passed through the gate to his house. How deserted it looked, lit by that single little lamp, whose tiny flame seemed to tremble at the dense darkness that rose from the valley! And the rough space it stood on, how bare it looked, how frightening! To a man whose nerves were a bit shaky . . .

Entering the house, he lit a candle, whose flame spluttered, as though someone were blowing on it. (Granella, who by now was in a blue funk, didn't notice that he was puffing on it himself, through his nostrils.)

Crossing several empty rooms to the one he had furnished, he protected this flame with his hand, and he fixed his eyes on it, so as not to see the shadow of his body, monstrously enlarged, running away across the walls and floor. Placing the candle on the chest of drawers, he was careful not to look towards the door, beyond which were further rooms. His heart was pounding; he was bathed in sweat.

And now, what next? Next he must shut that door—and lock it. Because—well, it was his habit; he always locked his door at night. There was no one here to lock it against—but, well, he was a man of habit. But why was he carrying the candle just to lock his door by? Just absent-mindedness. Of course; what else?

Next he would open the window—just the tiniest bit. The window with a balcony. Oof! the heat in that room, and how the varnish stank! While the room was getting aired he would make up his bed.

This he proceeded to do, with the bed-clothes he had brought. But barely had he arranged the mattress than a

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knock seemed to come from the door. A shiver ran through his loins like the stroke of a razor. A knob of his iron bed must have knocked against the wall. He waited. Silence. But the silence, somehow, seemed alive. . . .

Pulling himself together, he took hold of his pistol. Pointing it with his right hand, and holding the candle above his head with his left, he advanced cautiously. Opening the door very slightly, he said :

“ Who’s there ? ”

His voice in the empty room frightened him, and he stepped back. But recovering himself, he pointed his pistol ; and stamped his foot, angrily. He waited. Nothing. Silence. Charily he opened the door a bit wider, and peered at the back of it. Nothing in that room but a ladder, left by the workmen who had been papering the wall. Again came the knock. Well, now of course there was no doubt—the knob of the bed had knocked against the wall.

Returning to the bedroom, he sank into a chair. The bed he would make later—when his limbs were less heavy. On second thoughts he would sit on the balcony, to recover in the cool. For a while he sat in peace. Then——

“ *Zri !* ”

Curse that bat ! It had been attracted of course by the candle. He laughed, shakily. . . . He was pleased at having known it for a bat, and at not being frightened. He raised his eyes to look at the bat, fluttering in the darkness. Then, suddenly, he realised that the squeak had not come from a bat, but from the newly-pasted wall-paper, that seemed to be enjoying itself hugely ! Aha ! so this was how the ghosts played pranks ! But turning with a smile to look at the room, he saw . . . at first he didn’t know what he saw—and leapt to his feet, terrified. Stepping back on to the balcony, he caught at the parapet, his hair standing on end. In the

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room was an enormous tongue, white and terrible, that was slowly stretching itself out, along the floor, from the room that before had been empty.

It was a roll of wallpaper. Curse, curse those workmen, who had left it there at the top of the stairs! . . . But how had it unrolled itself like that, unfolding silently across the length of the two rooms, passing exactly between the open doors? . . .

Granella had had enough. Seizing hat and candle, he flew down the stairs for all he was worth. Opening the hall door about an inch, he peered outside. Not a soul. Pulling the door to, and hugging the wall of the house, he wriggled slowly, very slowly, into the dark. . . .

Why should he risk his health for the sake of that house? And besides, it would do him good to sleep out-of-doors. In that grilling heat . . . and the nights now were so short. . . . That lawyer's chatter had upset him. All nonsense, of course . . . but still, at night . . . Well, in the daylight it would all look different; and when the next night came he would be quite at home, accustomed to the house. He had been silly—yes, he had certainly been silly, to go there to-night, just from bravado. But to-morrow night . . .

That someone had seen him never entered his head. But, as luck would have it, that very night a carter had sheltered in the ruined shed. He had watched Granella creep from the house, cautious and frightened, and at dawn had seen him creep back into it. Astonished at this strange conduct, he spoke of it to people in the neighbourhood—people who the day before had given evidence for the Piccirillis. They in their turn spoke of it to Zummo.

The lawyer was exultant.

"I knew it! I knew it!" he shouted, with eyes glistening so brightly that they seemed to spurt out flames. "I

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swear to you all that I knew it beforehand. What's more, I was counting on it. Ah! now, *now* we'll get a rise out of friend Granella! Let's all join and put our backs into it. *Obè!* all together, my lads! . . ."

They plotted. They would lie in ambush in the ruined shed, and wait till night. But for God's sake, not a word to anyone. . . .

"Swear!"

"We swear!"

Zummo was entranced. No professional triumph in his career had ever given him such exquisite joy, such wild satisfaction. Peeping from the shed, he saw, about half-past eleven, Granella—creeping from the house with bare feet and in his shirt. With one hand he had hold of his shoes, while with the other he was clutching his trousers, which his trembling fingers had been unable to button.

"Booh!"

Zummo had sprung at him from the shadow like a tiger. The others too had leapt from their hiding-place and were all around him.

The wretched man, amid the shouts of laughter of his enemies, terrified, distraught, let fall his shoes, first one and then the other, and holding up his trousers over his stomach, leant against the wall, trembling and exhausted.

"Now, now d'you believe in the soul, the immortal soul?" yelled Zummo, advancing a fist into his face. "Blind justice gave you your verdict—blind like you. But now your eyes have been opened! What did you see? . . . Speak! . . ."

But Granella, crying and trembling, couldn't speak.

DOUGLAS BOYD

Blind

IN the village of Peverel lived Jonathan Flynn, a blind man. He had been blind since his youth, and had grown so familiar with the village and its surroundings that he had never felt a desire to live elsewhere; and he had become so accustomed to his blindness, also, that often he had been heard to say that it made no difference to him at all. It appeared that his affliction never troubled him. He went up and down the street with a curious sliding tread that gave no perceptible jerk to his erect body, and he had a certainty of movement that amazed those who knew little about him. He never walked into an obstacle; and if anyone turned aside to get out of his way, he would shake his stick and say, with a loud laugh: "Now, then, I see you—I see you——" and would step off the path out of *their* way, and they would look after him and wonder.

He had a companion, one Matthew Blanch, who also was blind. Matthew, however, wasn't so sure of himself. But that didn't matter, said Jonathan Flynn, because he could see—ha! yes, he could see for both of them; and he would walk up to Matthew's cottage and say: "Coming out for a walk, Matthew?" And Matthew would answer: "Yes,

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Jonathan"; and together they would stroll along the narrow, leafy lanes, bordered on both sides with hawthorn hedges and oak and ash and elm trees, and where it was so cool and so quiet; or walk over the green fields with the sun warm upon their sightless faces.

When they heard a sparrow singing on the boughs of the trees, or fluttering in the hedges, Jonathan would say :

"Listen, Matthew. That's a song-thrush. Do you know the song-thrush, Matthew? His wings and his back are brown, and his yellow breast is covered with little dark brown spots. He is a sweet little bird, and one of our finest singers." Or : "Do you hear that, Matthew? That's a bullfinch. He has a head like velvet, a deep rich black. He lives among the trees, but when the fruit-trees in the gardens and in the orchards begin to show flower-buds he comes out and eats them."

And Matthew would say : "Really, Jonathan, it's marvellous how you can tell." Sometimes, it is true, he wondered if Jonathan hadn't made a mistake, after all; if it wasn't really a yellow-hammer, who has a bright yellow head, and whose song consists of only two notes : the first repeated many times, and the other, a little lower, uttered only once—much different from the bullfinch's clear, piping call. He would not dare to say so—the suggestion that he might be wrong always annoyed Jonathan, who would puff himself out with pride and boast to Matthew that there was nothing he did not know or could not see, although he was as blind as a bat. He would boast all the way home. Matthew would stumble up the path to the door of his cottage and fumble for the latch. Jonathan, with an accuracy which made him chuckle, would strike with his stick at a dog as it brushed against his legs, finding pleasure in hearing it scamper

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to the other side of the road. With his body erect, his head held slightly forward, his stick swinging gently sideways, like a pendulum, in front of him, he walked down the street without making one false step, loudly proclaiming his knowledge of the whereabouts of everything and everybody.

But everyone in the village had, it seemed, some family connection with someone else in every other village in the neighbourhood, and his reputation for being able to see things he could not see was tossed hither and thither like a falling leaf in a boisterous wind. His name became a byword, not only among those with whom he was acquainted, but also among those of whom he had never heard; and it so happened that one day he met a man who not only could see, but who, being thus gifted, felt it incumbent on him to let others share his good fortune.

* * *

The sun was falling behind the distant hills. All day it had shone upon the parched land, burning up the freshness of the grass, leaving it so coarse and dry that the sheep lined the hedgerows, where the ground was sheltered and the grass more green. The path, which was brown and hard, threaded its way through the fields until it climbed the sudden steepness of Calloway Hill, where it twisted and turned like a brown snake among the scattered gorse. The hedges, their withered leaves as crisp as paper, were like dark, uneven walls. Tall nettles grew against them, hiding the ditches which were choked with sere wood and the dead, brown leaves of the last autumn.

“I hear someone coming,” said Matthew.

A voice was singing cheerfully behind them, but as he spoke it stopped, and nothing was heard but the sound of feet upon the path.

“I do not know that voice. He is a stranger,” said

Jonathan. "I know every one of the nine hundred voices in the village," he added.

They went on slowly and in silence towards the next gate, and as they reached it the voice again broke upon their ears, but this time loudly :

"Allow me to open the gate for you."

Matthew turned with a smile and said : "Thank you very much."

"Glad to be of assistance, Matthew Blanch. You know, Man was born to help his fellow-men, and what better opportunity has he than to aid those who cannot see ?"

"You are a stranger to us," said Jonathan, "but you seem to know who we are."

"Who has not heard of Jonathan Flynn ?" replied the other, with a slight irony ; "the man who is blind, and yet from whom nothing is hidden."

"Ah !" said Jonathan, looking pleased.

"If our path is in the same direction, may I go with you ?"

"With pleasure. We are going through Calloway's Covert, down the other side of the hill, and then round to the village. It is a delightful walk."

"Good. I may be of some service to you."

"We need no assistance. You know," said Jonathan, "some people imagine that we are as helpless as kittens."

"But, surely——"

"You have but to observe that, although our steps seem casual, they are made with certainty, to realise how unnecessary that assistance is."

"I am not so sure of my movements, Jonathan," said Matthew ; and then, turning his sightless eyes to the stranger, continued : "You see, I lost my sight when I was quite young. Nothing could arrest the disease which affected my eyes. Gradually I became quite blind. Everything with

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which I was so familiar, faces of those who were so dear to me, became blurred, then nearly indistinguishable, and were finally lost in darkness—darkness which at first frightened me.”

“A world in which you began to miss the things you sought and to blunder into the things you wished to avoid,” said the stranger.

“But a world——” began Jonathan.

“Yes,” went on Matthew. “At first my life was torture. Eight o’clock, midnight, the early hours of the morning—they were all the same to me : I went to bed when I felt tired. In darkness I laid my head upon the pillow and found rest in sleep ; and when the sounds of the morning aroused me, I awoke to find myself in that same darkness. With the day came Fear. It was as if a thousand little demons were in attendance upon me all the time, seeking at unexpected moments to jar a thousand little nerves with a thousand disappointments.”

“What a relief a guiding hand at your elbow must have been,” said the stranger ; and, first opening the gate to the next field, he took the two men by their arms and led them through it, adding : “And what a world to live in ! A world which knows no sun, no moon, no stars, no day.”

“But a world——” said Jonathan, irritably, shaking off the hand upon his arm.

“It seemed so,” said Matthew. “But I have imagination—a priceless gift to one who is blind—and Jonathan has taught me how to use it. When I am not quite sure of my path, or walking along one which is new to me, he leads me.”

“A blind man—placing such trust in one who also is blind !” exclaimed the stranger in tones which quite plainly said also : “Can there really be such folly ?”

"If you will allow me to speak," broke in Jonathan, "I would say that it is a world which is peopled with the same voices and which produces the same noises. Time has intensified our hearing. When I am walking in the village, my feet never stumble off the kerb—I am able to judge how far I am from the walls of the houses by the noise of my footsteps. I know every archway and every gateway, for each throws back a different echo. I know every lane and footpath for miles around, and Nature cannot betray me, because my ears have become sensitive to the slightest variations of her sounds. Nor is our world so empty as you imagine. Do you not feel the wind's warm touch upon your face, as light as if a feather was playing upon your cheeks?" He lifted his face towards the sky. "I see the white clouds—pure as the petals of a white rose—chasing one another towards the setting sun."

For a moment there was silence. Then said the stranger quietly, as one would point out an error to a child:

"It is not so. There are but one or two clouds, and they are almost black—a black tinged with purple, the colour of dark tulips—and seem heavy with rain. They come from the west."

"Rain—rain——" said Jonathan, petulantly. "There will be no rain. For six days we have had the burning sun, and shall for yet the seventh. The sky is red, and as the clouds draw closer to the west they are at first edged with pink, then turn a fiery scarlet."

"They are black clouds," repeated the other. "And—yes, there on the horizon are signs of a coming storm, a dull yellow ridge which tips the distant hills. The ridge of dull yellow is spreading from behind the wooded hill-tops like a great arc of light—a lurid, streaky yellow, which the earth and all that grows upon it seem to reflect."

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"Do you not hear the tinkle of a cow's bell and the barking of a dog?" said Jonathan, suddenly. "There—again. I see the drover with his stick, urging the cows towards the milking-sheds. Slowly, aimlessly——"

"The cows were in the milking-sheds half-an-hour ago. That bell you hear is round the neck of a sheep. That is not the drover's dog you hear—it is a mongrel worrying the whole flock. It must be stopped." He ran off, and they heard his cries mingling with the barking of the dog and the bleating of the sheep.

"I wonder who he is?" said Matthew.

Jonathan struck the path with his stick.

"I do not know his voice," he said, impatiently, "and I do not like him. He seems bent on disagreeing with everything I say. I believe he is doing it simply to annoy me."

"His assurance seems very convincing. . . ."

"I do not think he is reliable, and I certainly resent his offers of assistance."

"But, Jonathan, perhaps he is right, after all. We may be glad of his guidance through the covert."

"Matthew, you vex me. After having trusted me all these years, you now begin to doubt me. Must I, Jonathan Flynn," he said scornfully, "to whom these paths are as well known as that which leads up to my own cottage, turn back?"

"Very well. When we reach the covert I will take your arm."

"Let us go on," said Jonathan, striding forward.

"But, the stranger——"

"Let us go on, I say."

But when they reached the gate to the next field the stranger was there, awaiting them, and holding the gate open.

"Once I saw a swan flying," said Matthew, as they went on together. "It went through the still air like a solitary

streak of white against a sky of shell-blue, its long neck thrust forward like a spear."

"Pooh! that is nothing," said Jonathan. "Once I saw a peacock fly. You have never seen a peacock in flight, Matthew. It was quite tame, and when I held my hand towards it, it dropped from the wall upon which it was proudly displaying itself, to the ground. But as I approached it, it retreated until it found itself in a corner from which there was no escape. Uttering loud cries, it lifted its beautiful body with wings that seemed far too small and inadequate, and rose, just skimmed the wall, and then went still higher until it vanished over the tops of the tallest trees."

"And now," the stranger said, "you cannot see even the sparrows."

Jonathan frowned, and again struck the path with his stick: a sure indication, Matthew was aware, of his displeasure.

"You are wrong. I, Jonathan Flynn, not see the sparrows? Why, the birds fill my world with light and music. Think you that I cannot tell the skylark from the cuckoo? the blue-tit, with his bright blue crown and white cheeks and greenish-blue back and wings, from the little, brown meadow-pipit? You are wrong. Isn't he, Matthew?"

"Why—yes," replied Matthew. Could not he, too, tell the skylark from the cuckoo?

"Do you hear that flap-flap of wings in the tops of the trees of the covert?" asked Jonathan. "That's a wood-pigeon—a wood-pigeon, I say. They clap their wings together with a sharp sound, which can often be heard a long way off."

"Ha!" said the stranger, amused. "That's not a wood-pigeon. It's a rook."

"It's a wood-pigeon, I tell you. When they are suddenly

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startled they always fly out with a great flapping of wings and noisy disturbance among the branches."

"It is a rook. It has just left the covert and is flying to a neighbouring copse."

"It is a wood-pigeon," repeated Jonathan, stubbornly. "It's colours are soft and rich."

"It is a common, black rook."

"A wood-pigeon."

"A rook."

But Jonathan, angrily taking Matthew by the arm, would not say another word. They had reached the hill, and Jonathan began to strike the gorse bushes with his stick, turning now to the right of this one, now to the left of that one, his lips moving as inaudibly he counted his steps between them, until he reached the top where the brown path crept beneath a stile and vanished into the covert.

One after another they climbed over the stile, and Jonathan once again taking Matthew's arm, they went into the woods.

Here the air was cool and refreshing. The grass was fresh and green, and the moss-covered path was like a long green cushion, soft beneath their tread. It was bordered on one side by a deep ditch, and on the other by an impenetrable thicket. Great trees stretched their long, twisted branches, heavy with foliage, over all, a canopy of brown and green. From the thicket rats peered at them with little beady eyes; rabbits scampered through the undergrowth; and in the deepened twilight sparrows, tom-tits, bullfinches and thrushes went from branch to branch and fluttered in the bushes.

"You will surely let me guide you through the covert?" said the stranger.

"We do not require your assistance," replied Jonathan, sharply.

"There is a ditch beside the path——"

"I know it."

"There are all these trees around you——"

"I am aware of them. I do not need you to tell me where they are."

"Oh—well, I am sorry. I meant only to be kind. I will hurry on."

"You forced your company upon us, just as now you thrust upon us your offer of assistance," went on Jonathan, who felt in a very bad humour.

"If you do not want me, I will hurry on," said the stranger again; and, stepping over a fallen branch which lay across his path, he went off with quick strides.

"You have assumed that I am incapable of looking after myself and my friend," Jonathan, his anger rising, called after him; "that we are not safe unless we crawl about gingerly upon our hands and knees, like babies. You have amused yourself at our expense by contradicting everything we have said. You——"

Suddenly he uttered a loud cry, and the stranger, turning quickly, saw him trip over the fallen branch and go headlong into the ditch, dragging Matthew with him.

"Help! help!" cried Matthew, one hand pressing Jonathan's face into the soft earth, the other feeling for the bank.

Jonathan pulled Matthew's hair.

"Get off me—get off me!" he screamed, and, twisting his body, he reversed the position. With one knee in the pit of Matthew's stomach, he wrestled blindly with the black-thorn bushes which spread in confusion about the ditch. His hands and face torn by the sharp thorns, he climbed up the bank and stood there cursing.

"Where is my stick?" he shouted. "Where is my stick?"

BLIND

“ You have climbed out on the wrong side of the ditch,” the stranger told him.

“ Where is my stick ? Where is my stick ? ” stormed Jonathan, as if he had not heard, and fumbling in the grass at his feet.

“ Help me—help me ! ” said Matthew, and rising, caught hold of Jonathan’s coat. Then his feet slipped on the rotting leaves which formed the soft bed of the ditch, and again he fell, pulling Jonathan with him. Once more they began to fight and to struggle with each other, scattering the leaves about them, smearing their hair and their faces with the damp earth ; until, at last, they managed to separate and regain the path.

Excited by their cries, the covert had stirred into great activity. Startled rabbits appeared, paused, then turned quickly, showing little tufts of white fur that jerked up and down for an instant and then vanished. The birds flew swiftly from the bushes, and in the tops of the trees the rooks chattered, clapped their wings agitatedly against the branches, and went noisily out of the covert ; and as the sound of their wings died away the covert became shrouded in silence.

Then the stranger left them. They heard his steps fade softly upon the moss-covered path. But with his going, came Fear ; and Matthew began to tremble violently, as, staring into his darkness, he fancied he saw, like dim shadows, the twisted shapes that stood about him ; and even Jonathan threw back his head and held out an arm before his white face, as if to ward off some tangible thing.

And all around them came suddenly the gentle snapping of twigs, as if the woods were being trodden by countless, unseen feet.

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The Music-Box

LEONARD MARKHAM stood on the little jetty at the end of his garden and gazed dejectedly out to sea. His hands were thrust into his pockets, his shoulders a little hunched. It was the day's brief moment of perfection, when dew hung in the flaming hibiscus blooms, and the sun's touch was still a caress. A little haze blurred the distant headlands and softened the edges of the jungle mass where it ran down into the sea.

Leonard saw nothing of this. His eyes were riveted on a speck far out at sea. Soon it would disappear over the horizon, and only a few puffs of smoke would hang low in the sky to mark the place where it had gone.

"Another month!" murmured Leonard, and then, "Oh, damn!"

His hands clenched until the knuckles showed white. The speck had quite gone now. He was alone. Not really alone, of course. Away to the right lay the native kampong, with all its teeming brown-skinned people. Leonard could see the houses on their rickety legs, and the sprawling coconut palms cutting sharp patterns against the sky, and he knew that the care-free Malays, who fished or danced or lazed as the

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spirit moved them, were his friends. But the steamer had gone, and he was alone.

Between Leonard's bungalow and the kampong lay the Government offices, the court house, the gaol and the wireless station—neat white buildings set out on trim lawns. This was Leonard's domain, for he was the District Officer. From those white buildings he controlled an enormous area, keeping the peace, collecting taxes, and meting out justice with the meticulous care that was typical of him. He took enormous pride in the neatness of his offices, for they seemed to him to represent order in the midst of chaos. They were the stronghold of civilisation.

Yet now, turning gloomily towards them, it struck him how pitiful they looked amidst the primitive forces all round them. The straggling, teeming kampong was one with the immensity of sea and sky and jungle. His little white dolls'-houses were all out of the picture. They looked absurd. The stronghold of civilisation! With one surge of its green waves the jungle tide could rise and swallow the lot. He thought that he was rather like his own offices, neat, urbane and absurd, an ineffectual speck amid the lush magnificence of the tropic scene.

A rustling in the bushes near him distracted his attention. A little Malay girl, bright as the morning in her gay sarong, was picking flowers. Still half lost in thought, he watched her as she moved from bush to bush like a butterfly.

"Good morning, Narya," he called at length, in his precise Malay. "Are there plenty of flowers this morning?"

"The Tuan's flowers are always beautiful," she answered, "and Narya is honoured to be allowed to pick them."

This had been her privilege for a long time now, but she never forgot to thank him.

There was a pause, and then she asked shyly :

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"Does the Tuan love the ship's captain so much?"

"No, I don't love him, Narya; but I am sorry to see him go."

"I think he is rough-voiced and has too many whiskers on his face," said Narya, with the intolerance of youth.

Leonard inwardly held the same opinion, but he said:

"He is English."

In some dim, half-guessed way, Narya understood the longing of the man for his own kind. So she said consolingly:

"In a month he will come again."

"A month," thought Leonard, bitterly. "A month without letters, or papers, or news of the real world—without even a chat in one's own tongue with a fellow-countryman."

"Has he brought new plates for the music-box," she asked, still hoping to console.

A little tingling of comfort crept into Leonard's heart. "Yes," he said, "and to-night you and Abang must come to my house to hear them."

Narya went off delighted with her invitation. Not because she liked the "music-box," but because she loved the Tuan.

Reminded of his new records, Leonard went into the house and looked them over again. They were an odd assortment—jazz, musical comedy, two violin solos, an operatic aria sung by a famous soprano, and a Bach Concerto consisting of several parts. He fingered them lovingly, and spent some time putting them away in their proper compartments in the cabinet.

He had tried none of them yet. Nor would he do so haphazard. They were too rare a treat to be squandered recklessly. Each would be fitted into a suitable programme and produced in its proper and due time.

He wondered which he should try that evening. Of course, the children would like the light stuff. He might

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have a real English Music-hall night—those old Harry Lauders, Jack Hylton's band, Gracie Fields and the new jazz. He would ask that English-speaking clerk. He liked that sort of thing.

But the new Bach——. He was longing to hear it. Yes! the Bach it must be—a Bach Recital.

His Chinese boy called him to breakfast three times before he heard.

* * *

Leonard came down to dinner in immaculate evening dress as was his custom for Grand Opera and classical concerts. First he arranged the records in the order in which he wished to hear them. Then he chose a few dance records to be played during dinner. This was all he had to do with the mechanical part of the performance, for he had trained an under-boy to wind the gramophone and change the records. He then sat down to dinner.

Leonard's dining-room was a dreary room at night. The stifling blackness of the tropic night seemed to invade the place, despite the efforts of the one oil-lamp. Innumerable insects would come in to dash their foolish heads against the light and die depressingly on the table. The sound of drums crept up with irritating monotony from the kampong.

But for Leonard these things were not. For him, the strains of a foxtrot were building a world of lights and happy crowds. He felt gay and vaguely expectant. There were rich carpets under his feet, well-dressed people all about him, and everywhere lights, and yet more lights.

As the boy served him with a watery soup, this vague atmosphere began to take on something of a definite shape and place. A restaurant perhaps—a noisy place, but gay. He smelt the succulent smell of food, heard the clicking of

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plates and cutlery. He was choosing from a menu—sole ? fillet steak ?

“ I think I’ll take some of the sole, thank you.”

The words formed themselves on his lips.

Seeing the dreamy look in his master’s eyes, the boy was relieved. For the third time that week he was serving a dish of rice and fish. No matter. The Tuan would not notice.

When the tune changed to a waltz, Leonard thought of women. They moved about him, tall and elegant, in silken sophistication. He caught an impression of a fine hand exquisitely manicured, of hair shining like pale gold. Now he was slipping furs from ivory shoulders.

He wanted to dance. The rhythm of this slow foxtrot was perfect. Really he began to regret that classical concert. He should have taken seats for some musical show——

“ Tuan, we have come.”

There was a crashing in his ears, a splintering and tearing as of glass bursting into fragments, as his brittle world smashed down, destroyed by a small girl’s voice.

The corners of his mouth twitched. He noticed that there was a dead moth in his rice.

“ We have brought you mangosteens,” said the boy, holding out a basket of the delicious fruit.

Ah ! that was kind of them. These nice children—— He must thank them. But still, for a moment, he did not speak.

“ Tuan,” said the girl, her voice coaxing, “ let us not have the music-box to-night. Let us look at pictures instead.”

“ But, Narya, I have—it is all arranged.” He had nearly said “ taken the tickets.”

“ Oh ! I hate your music-box,” cried the girl, sudden passion flaming up in her. “ Always, always the music-box, and you do not even see me any more ! ”

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Leonard was startled, and the brother looked at her with shocked eyes. She had been rude, an unforgivable sin in a Malay.

“For shame, Narya!” he cried.

The colour flooded her face and she murmured an apology.

“But yet it is true that I do hate your music-box,” she added.

Leonard hesitated. It was plain that the children were bored with the gramophone. He ought to please them. But he was longing to hear the new Bach. For a little he struggled with himself.

“To-morrow let us look at pictures,” he said at last.

* * *

Narya and Abang were the children of the Datu Mahomet Kadir, head-man of the village. From the first Leonard had been attracted by their good looks and aristocratic bearing. He had made friends with them, and gradually formed the habit of having them to his house, giving them sweets and biscuits, and showing them pictures. In those days he had been a gay companion. Sometimes he played wild games with them, or sang them comic English songs, of which they did not understand a word. And sometimes he danced the funny English dances for them, seizing a bolster for a partner. How that had made them laugh! He never did that now.

In those days, Narya had been a little wild thing of eleven, and Abang a baby of nine. Now Abang was a sturdy boy of twelve, and Narya, at fourteen, thought herself a woman. She bore herself with dignity, and seldom displayed the fiery temper that had marked her childhood. But one subject would always provoke her—her marriage. Already her family were looking round for a suitable match, but at every suggested name she would flame up.

"I will not marry!" she would shout, stamping her foot. And they all laughed and indulged her, for they knew that she had set her heart on the Tuan—the handsome Tuan with the fine clothes and dreamy eyes.

"It is a whim, and will pass," said the old Datu, who adored her. He did not intend to marry her off for a year or two.

For Leonard she was still a pretty child.

* * *

Leonard leaned back in his chair, and the two children sat, native fashion, on the floor. The gramophone played. The children heard a confused jumble of sounds which they thought ugly and boring. Leonard heard the fine patterns and delicate intricacies of point and counterpoint that had been born in the brain of the composer, Bach, and his spirit found release. For a while he lingered in echoing concert-halls, heard the rustle of programmes, the expectant cough, the exciting tap of the conductor's baton. But the spell of Bach was more potent than that. It led him through fine houses and well-ordered gardens. Books and pictures were about him, and gentle people, whose passions were measured and controlled. A secret was unfolding itself to him—the secret of all sweet and gracious living.

Narya watched the strained look pass from his face, and saw the sensitive mouth relax. What did the music do to him? As she looked, suddenly she knew that he was slipping away from her. Now, he was not really there any more. Wild panic clutched at her heart. He was gone, and she would never reach him. She could shout, and for a little he would return, but as soon as he heard the music he would slip away again. Impotent rage seized her, because she knew now that she would never, never reach him.

Beckoning her brother, she rose quietly and slipped away.

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All that night she tossed feverishly on her sleeping-mat. Waves of anger and jealousy and blank misery submerged her as she struggled against the realisation of her defeat. In the morning she sought out her brother.

"Abang, why does the Tuan not love me?"

"Because you are not white."

"But am I not beautiful?"

"They say you are beautiful," he said, with brotherly moderation, "but you are not tall and fair, as the women in the Tuan's pictures."

This stung.

"Abang, you are very stupid," she said haughtily. "It is not because of that at all. It is the music-box. I have come to know"—she lowered her voice and spoke dramatically—"that the music-box is a god. It has great power over the Tuan, and takes his spirit away to strange places. It is very jealous and will not let the Tuan even look at me."

Abang, knowing his Narya, was not impressed.

"It is just a box," he said, "and you are jealous because it makes the Tuan happy."

"Happy! Yes! and wine makes a man happy! It also makes him very drunk and that is bad."

"What does it matter if he is happy?"

"What does it matter!" she cried. "I will show you what it matters! I, the Dayang Narya binti Mahomet Kadir, will show you whether I am to be put down by a stupid box! I will——"

Abang caught her hands and looked at her with narrowed eyes.

"What are you going to do, Narya?" he asked, afraid.

She would not answer.

* * *

When Leonard came home to tiffin he stopped, aghast, at

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the door. Slowly the colour drained from his face, and he put a hand on the lintel to support his swaying body. Then he sat down quietly, and buried his face in his hands.

Every one of his records had been smashed, and the fragments lay in a heap on the floor.

* . * *

The Resident and the doctor set out by launch as soon as they got the cable from Leonard's English-speaking clerk. It was vague and disturbing.

"Mr. Markham behaving very queerly please come."

The clerk himself met them at the jetty with obvious relief.

"You see, sirs," he explained, as he escorted them to the bungalow, "he is all the time playing and playing the gramophone. Every evening, all the Datus and the Hajis and the clerks must come to his house to listen. But, sirs, *he has no records!*"

"Then, how the devil does he play it?" asked the Resident, sharply.

"He doesn't! We all sit round it. And all the time Mr. Markham is saying how lovely it is, and all the Malays agree for fear of hurting his feelings. But there is no sound coming out."

The two Englishmen exchanged glances.

By this time they had reached the bungalow, and Leonard came down to meet them.

"Oh! hullo!" he said, vaguely. "Do come in. I was just entertaining these fellows with a little music. Lovely thing, this Concerto in D."

The Malays were sitting round in stiff, embarrassed silence. In a corner, a little girl was crying as if her heart would break.

Quinette's Crime¹

[Continued from our April Issue]

For a synopsis of the previous instalments see page 681

THE door-keeper tells me that you have been waiting since nine o'clock. You are a punctual person."

"I try to be."

"Come into this office here. There's nobody in it. I don't think Monsieur Lespinas will be very long now."

"Have you laid hands on the man of the photo?"

"I'm not sure. I haven't been looking after that. I've been busy elsewhere. I got word of a man wounded in the hand who turned up at Necker on the day in question. However, we'll see about that."

"What an interesting profession yours is, monsieur!"

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. Sometimes I'm sorry that I didn't turn that way myself."

"Don't get the idea that it's always exciting."

"But it's never dull, is it—as it is in so many other professions? . . ."

"I can scarcely draw any comparison. I've been in it

¹ Translated from the French by Warre B. Wells.

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ever since I finished my military service. It's certainly true that anybody who wants to risk his skin . . . When I was younger than I am now, I was wild about that. I did everything I possibly could to take part in dangerous work. Several times I nearly lost my life."

"Were you ever wounded?"

"Yes. But nothing very serious. In that way I've always been lucky. I got a bullet through my forearm. I still have the scars of it. The fellow shot at me through his side-pocket. That was my worst wound. So you see! But another time I got chucked into the water."

"Really?"

"Into the canal. A couple of bastards I was after who lay in wait for me."

"Where was this?"

"The Quai de l'Oise. Right opposite the rue des Ardennes. Ten yards away from the railway bridge. Right in the shadow of the bridge. I haven't forgotten that, you may imagine."

"Is it a bad neighbourhood about there?"

"All the canal is dangerous, especially late at night."

"You managed to get out?"

"I swim pretty well. But that would not have saved me, clothed as I was and stunned by the blow of a fist. . . . I had an astonishing piece of luck. I happened to get hold of a half-submerged canoe. I should have finished sinking it, but it was moored with a rope. I don't know just how I came to. I hung on to one side of the canoe and to the rope. My two bastards had bolted. All the same, I didn't show myself at once. I remember that I stayed a good quarter of an hour shivering under the bridge. Then I heard a cab coming along. It was quite a job to get the cabby to make up his mind to take me."

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"It surprises me that more people don't get thrown into the canal. It seems so easy."

"Well, a good few do get thrown in."

"Not so many, from all one reads. Unless there are some who are never found. What do you think? Does the canal give up all its bodies?"

"They say it does. By the way, talking about that, I had an even worse time once. In the quarries at Bagnolet. Do you know them?"

"No."

"I only went back there once afterwards. Everything was very much the same. I don't know whether the place has changed since. It's possible. At that time it was the most out-of-the-way place you could imagine. There were very deep galleries. At night they served as a shelter for all kinds of scum. It was a shifting population. In general, I don't know why, they didn't stay very long. There were ordinary fly-by-nights, of course. Then, for some months, pervers organised some fine parties there. Some people quite high up in society took part in them, it was said. At other times there was nobody there at all.

"Well, this time I'm telling you about, a gang of burglars, who operated especially in the neighbourhood of Saint-Mandé and Vincennes, had established their headquarters at the end of one of these galleries. Dangerous fellows, who always went for the best country-houses and were suspected of having done worse than that on two or three occasions. I told you that I was young. I dreamed about nothing but police work in heroic circumstances. I had a chief who understood this and was very fond of me. Well, I disguised myself as a tramp, and I was to be seen wandering about the galleries in my rags and with my knapsack, with a loaf of bread sticking out of it. I used to sleep curled up in

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"So another adventure like yours might still happen?"

"Why? Do you want it to happen to you?"

Quinette turned pale, smiled, and put on the air of a man who sees a good joke rather belatedly. Then he said:

"Yes, indeed, when I was younger, I think I should have been just as keen about it as yourself."

"You really think that it might have been your vocation?"

"Yes. Even now, if such things are possible, I should be delighted to give up my spare time to inquiries, any little investigations . . ."

"If you were in any other line of business—a wine-merchant, for example, or even a news-agent—we should be only too glad to make use of you. . . . But in a shop like yours you don't get many people—people who interest us. Or, again, if you had access to extremist circles in politics—— That isn't the case, is it?"

"No. Not at the moment."

"Still, I'll mention the matter to my chiefs. Outside our regular organisation we haven't got so many people with brains and a sense of responsibility. There are some bad eggs whom we have to use, that you've got to handle with a pair of tongs. I may tell you that if, in connection with your visitor with the bloody hands, you have the luck to put us on to a good scent, the authorities will be only too glad to make themselves agreeable to you. You couldn't have a better recommendation."

"Do you really mean that? People say that witnesses let themselves in for more trouble than anything else."

"Before the examining magistrates sometimes, or with the lawyers; but not with us, if they have really been useful to us. . . . On the contrary, this is a place where we know the meaning of the word 'gratitude.' Hallo, I hear Monsieur

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Lespinas's voice. I'll just go and see what's happening. I'll be back in a moment."

Quinette was left in the office, whose exact function he did not know, but which was, in any case, a police office. He could have sipped the pleasure of his presence in such a place if only he had had any leisure for that kind of appreciation. But his head was going round and round. He was intoxicated with the prospect of having to choose among several visions of the immediate future which rivalled one another in intensity. He could not bring himself to give up any of them. He postponed any debate inside himself which would involve separating them from one another. He hoped that, by dint of floating together before his eyes, they would end by merging into a single whole. This logical man reached the point of wishing that his reasoning power would leave him alone.

The inspector came back.

"Come this way."

They left the office together.

"This is serious business now. Above all, don't try to make any suggestions to yourself. Don't even ask yourself any questions. Your first glance will have to tell you yes or no."

They turned down a long passage. About twenty yards. About twenty seconds in front of him. Not a question any longer of toying with a choice as he stroked his beard. Less than twenty seconds, and he would come to a cross-road of events which you reached like a car going at full speed. Turn to the right or turn to the left. No middle course. And no time to hesitate.

The inspector opened a door. Quinette caught a glimpse of M. Lespinas sitting at a little table, and several men sitting on a bench. Four, to be exact, who stood up as the door

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opened. At the sight of them Quinette was seized with a temptation so violent that it felt like some instrument being twisted around between his stomach and his chest. Point out one of these men for the assizes and the scaffold. Point him out in a spasm of the will to power.

He resisted the temptation, just as a tramp resists the temptation to rape a shepherd-girl. He resisted it so strongly that his little black eyes opened their widest, and the sweat ran down his forehead. He walked past the four men, forcing himself, despite everything, to look at them. He turned back towards M. Lespinas, who was watching him. He shrugged his shoulders and spread out his arms a little, murmuring :

“No. . . . He’s not there. . . . None of them.”

He felt a sudden, an abysmal, sinking of nervous pressure that was almost unendurable. Something inside him delivered sentence : “It’s Leheudry who will have to pay for this.”

* * *

Quinette was drowsing before dawn.

“The entrance to the quarries. The night-watchman. No, there isn’t any night-watchman. The clay. I’ve got a lantern. Or have I got a lantern? The clay. The spur track. I shan’t be able to pick my way through all that unless I have a lantern. A lantern swinging between him and me. No, I’d rather depend on the light in the sky. The reflection of the lights of Paris in the sky. The entrance to the quarry. The big hole where you go in. The cave. The cave on the Buttes-Chaumont.”

He refused to go on. He slipped in the clay. The two of them slipped. He slipped on purpose. The lantern dropped out of his hands. There was no light left. “I refuse to go on.” He fell on his knees on purpose.

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The entrance to the quarries. The black cut. That hole, badly cut out with scissors. It would have to be cut out more. Hold the scissors farther away. Give them a good twist when you get to the top.

They would never get there. He refused to go on. The night-watchman swung his lantern. No, there wasn't any night-watchman. There wasn't any lantern. The reflection of the lights of Paris shone on the spur track.

He repeated: "I will not go on." The entrance to the cave. They must get to the end of it. Bring him along to the end of it. The catacombs. How well the bones were preserved!

He said: "I will not go on." Thirty paces more to the entrance of the cave. They must get to the end of it. Sophie Parent is waiting for you.

The lantern lit up his face. No more face. He must put out the lantern. The reflection of Paris lit up his face. No more face.

I don't want to see that face any more. I must put out the look of his eyes.

The entrance to the cave. We've got to the entrance. Sophie Parent is waiting for you at the other end. It's dark here. But Sophie Parent is at the other end. Sophie Parent in her shop is at the other end; sitting in plenty of light.

Hide your face. Pass your hand over your face and rub it away little by little. Fish eat the faces of drowned men. Rub hard with your hand. The nose is gone. The chin is gone.

The entrance to the quarry. Is it wet? No. Barely damp. One is better off here than in the canal. Right at the end you'll be better off than in the canal.

He says: "I'm not going any farther." Sophie Parent is waiting for you. Who said anything about the canal?

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There isn't any water. There's only Sophie Parent, sitting in the light. There is also—how does that happen?—that little lady whose book I ought to finish to-morrow morning.

The light consumes your face.

He says: "Sophie Parent isn't there. I'm not going any farther." But she is. Go along in. I tell you she is.

I must kill him while his back is turned. I must kill him when he gets right to the end. Go on. Hurry up. Sophie Parent is waiting for you.

Did anybody hear the shot? The night-watchman didn't hear it. There is no night-watchman. Sophie Parent is there, but she didn't hear it.

Bang! right at the end. In the hollow of the rock. There's enough light. A soft light. You will be better off than in the canal.

Thou shalt not kill. One must never kill. Men die like flies. One kills flies.

The burglar sleeps like a hunting dog. He sleeps like a dog. He didn't hear it.

"Don't kill me!" "Oh, don't worry!" I could kill a dozen more like you.

"Do you want my money?" "Oh, don't worry!"

The entrance. Still the main entrance. Oh, it's terrible to be always going back like this! Get on to the rails. You can see it's dry farther on.

No, this isn't the canal. In the canal there isn't that soft light at the end.

I don't want to see that face of yours any more. Leave that face of yours right at the end there.

He refuses to go on. What, again? I can't kill him because the burglar is listening. The night-watchman is listening.

I can only kill you right at the end. Sophie Parent is

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waiting for you at the end. Love. The sunshine of love. The sun of dawn.

I will give the key to Sophie Parent so that she may put that face of yours in the safe.

Love eternal.

You will be better off there than in the canal, my friend. Turn around. Look about you. Isn't it a good place for a dead man?

* * *

They made their way along the muddy path. To the left, high up, very remote, a stray lamp-post illuminated the far end of a suburban lane running between mean houses. But its light struck like a ray of moonlight as far as the path where the two men were walking. Quinette was surprised at it. He had asked himself first whether this light did not ricochet down from the sky, whether it was not the reflection of Paris. Now that he recognised where it came from, he still asked himself whether the reflection of Paris did not contribute to it.

He was surprised, too, at the muddiness of the path. Late in the afternoon, when he had come this way by himself, he had not noticed this mud. To what was it due? The weather was dry. To-night everything demanded Quinette's attention. Everything was important.

"What ideas you get into your head! They don't bear talking about!"

Here was Leheudry lying down on the job and arguing all over again. The best thing was to make no reply. He kept on talking; but he kept on walking. What little strength of will he possessed was frittered away in words.

"Yes, you're full of ideas, aren't you? It's a specialty of yours, from the looks of it. Oh yes, it was a fine inspiration of mine, that time when I went to that shop of yours! . . .

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"This path is nothing but clay. We're going to be down on our noses any moment. . . . Look here, it strikes me that you've got something worrying you, for all your giving yourself these airs of being so much cleverer than anybody else."

Every sentence came to Quinette's ears with a trace of anxiety about it, isolated between two silences in which he could hear the squelching sound that their soles made in the clay.

"According to your own story, you were going to arrange everything. And every time it's a bit worse than before. If you ask me, it was this visit of yours to her on Monday that put ideas into her head. All this story she told you about her husband getting suspicious and wanting to go to the safe himself is just imagination. Even if one admits that she ever did tell it to you."

Quinette was so exasperated that he could not restrain himself from retorting :

"She'll tell you so herself in the next few minutes."

"You fixed her up so that she feels she can't go on living as long as she knows that parcel is in the safe. But I saw her a couple of times afterwards. She wasn't worrying about it at all. I knew the girl well enough myself. . . . I knew I could depend on her. . . . And still I don't set up to be so clever as you. . . . Here are some rails now. I'm not walking along here just for the fun of breaking my nose. Look here : it was in case we were nabbed that you wanted me to come out without any personal papers in my pocket, wasn't it ?"

"Of course."

"Well, it's hardly worth while dragging me all this way if you're only going to take us somewhere where we may still get nabbed."

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"You're not running any risk here. It was a general precaution that I was reminding you of. In a case like yours, there's an absolute rule: never go out with any documents on you. Or at least carry false ones. No initials on your suit, or on your linen, either. I told you to take any you had off, didn't I?"

"I didn't have to take the trouble. I don't carry any initials about on me. I'm not so dressy as all that. But, once you're nabbed, what difference does it make, anyway?"

"I beg your pardon—it does. You might simply be rounded up in a raid. You give any name you like. The next day they let you go. They've nothing to keep that might put them on your track again. By the way, you've still got that card I gave you in your pocket, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"And you remember the name?"

"Yes. Léon Dufucret. It's a fool of a name. Besides, if they pinch us when we have the parcel on us, what good will it do?"

"They're not likely to pinch us in the gallery without our having time to get rid of the parcel."

"But what about on the way back?"

"You've made up your mind that you won't leave it there?"

"In the gallery?"

"Yes, certainly. That's partly why I chose it as a rendez-vous. I just want you to see what kind of a hiding-place I've picked for you. Just for the time being, while they're making inquiries, of course. You can go back there any time you like, just as you can to a safe-deposit in a bank, but without having to report to anybody. . . . So there you are!"

"Just where any lousy son of a gun may stumble over it!"

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Nothing doing. I should say not. . . . But I was just asking you : what about on the way back ? You know it's full of family letters of mine, with all the names. Suppose they pinch us on the way back ? ”

“ On the way back ? . . . I hadn't thought about that. . . . ”

The rails turned off towards the right. The place seemed more out of the way than ever. Leheudry kept on walking along the embankment, with stumbling feet. When he had missed his step several times in succession, his bad temper got the better of him again.

“ Anyway, there were about thirty-six ways in which she could have given it back to me, without our coming and falling over our own feet in this damn hole.”

“ What ways ? ”

“ She could have met us in a café.”

“ She didn't want to.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ To be on the safe side, I suppose. Anyway, I didn't press her. It's too dangerous.”

“ With all the cafés there are to choose from ? Think again ! ”

“ A woman a bit upset, with a parcel like that under her arm, wandering up and down three or four streets looking for the place you said—it doesn't want much more than that for a policeman to pull her in. Sharing up the swag in a café ! It's such a time-honoured wheeze ! ”

“ Well, what about in the street, or in a square ? ”

“ That's not much better. Besides, it seems to me essential that you should verify the contents of the parcel yourself. That's something you can only do under cover.”

“ Under her very nose ? ”

“ No. I'll keep her talking meanwhile. You can take a quick look.”

QUINETTE'S CRIME

"Where did you say she was going to wait for you?"

"At the tram-car stop in the rue des Champeaux. There's a shelter there."

"Why shouldn't we both go straight there?"

"I don't see what you mean."

"You're not going to make me believe that in a suburban street like that, at this time of night, anybody is going to take any notice of us."

"But what about opening the parcel?"

"Oh, I trust the girl. I'm quite sure she hasn't touched it at all."

It was getting darker and darker. The light of the distant lamp still coloured the slightly misty air, but did not penetrate the darkness of the ground. The path got wider. You could sense a deep depression, with little hummocks rising out of it, dominated by high cliffs straight ahead.

Quinette took his electric flashlight out of his pocket, and switched it on for a moment. You could see cart-ruts running off into the clay, all awry. He switched the light off again.

Then he lowered his voice. He spoke in the tone of a man disclosing a rather delicate, confidential matter.

"I may as well tell you this, too. . . . I got the idea that she wanted to have a few moments alone with you. . . ."

As he spoke these words, he realised that they were giving him an odd sense of excitement himself. He imagined Sophie Parent at the end of the gallery; not exactly naked, but with her clothes lifted up; ready for love. He would possess her in the darkness. Or, rather, it would be that pretty little lady with the sad eyes who had come for her book that morning. It was she whom he would possess in the darkness; or in the dim light of his pocket-flashlight, laid sideways on the ground. He was bound to possess her

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sooner or later. He could do so any time he liked now. How pleasant it was to feel that reawakening of virile energy !

But these same words of his wrapped Leheudry in a mist of intoxication. With something hoarse, something overheated, in his voice, he asked :

“ Did she really tell you that ? ”

“ Not in so many words. What do you think ? . . . But that little girl has got you under her skin. . . . I couldn't suggest that you should meet her at the hotel. . . . It would have been too risky.”

Leheudry did not object or argue any longer.

“ Is it far away, this tram-car stop of yours ? Will it take you long to get back ? ”

“ No. Only ten or fifteen minutes.”

“ Are you sure she will be able to find it ? ”

“ I'm quite sure she will. I made a point of telling her the tram-line and the name of the stop.”

“ But what about me—where am I going to wait for you ? ”

“ At the end of the gallery. I'm going to take you there first.”

“ I shall be all in the dark. . . .”

“ I have another pocket-flashlight. I can leave it with you.”

“ It's not too messy on the ground, at the end of this gallery of yours ? ”

“ Not at all. The ground is quite dry. In fact, I think there's some sand.”

“ No risk of running into any fellows having a doss there ? ”

“ No, not in this direction.”

“ I can't make out how you find your way. For my part, I can't see a thing. We haven't even got the rails any longer.

QUINETTE'S CRIME

"That's true, what you told me, isn't it—that you used to come to this place when you were in the police?"

"Yes."

"Give us a gleam of that lamp of yours, now and then, so that we can see where we're going. She's going to be horribly scared, that little Sophie of mine! I can't imagine how you managed to get her to come here. You have got a way with you sometimes. But look here—if we're going to have a few moments together, what will you do with yourself?"

"I'll wait at the entrance to the gallery. If there's any kind of danger, I'll give you warning."

"That's really nice of you. You've got some good sides to you, after all. You're not so bad, in your own way."

As they approached it, the high cliff became vaguely visible. But right in front of them this looming of it, almost imperceptibly greyish and ruddy, presented an enormous gap. It was as though a gulf were turned upside down. It was as though the night rose straight up out of the ground.

Leheudry stopped.

"I can't get it into my head that Sophie is going to meet me down there."

"Is it the loneliness that impresses you?"

"It's not only the loneliness of it. It's the whole thing."

* * *

Quinette and Leheudry walked under the vaulted roof. Leheudry went first. It was he who held the electric flashlight. Quinette said to him:

"You take this. You'll see where you are going better. I'll keep the other one in reserve."

As a matter of fact, the ground was quite dry, and if you kept to the middle of the gallery, you walked on a soft dust which lessened the roughness underfoot.

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The roof lowered little by little. Right ahead, it looked as though the gallery was going to end in a battered rock-wall. In a corner was something dark, which looked like a piece of clothing.

Leheudry stopped.

"A coat. There's somebody here."

"No, it's only an old rag."

Leheudry explored the walls of the passage with the beam of his flashlight. His companion told him :

"We have to turn to the right. You'll see. There's a smaller gallery, at right angles. Another minute and we'll be there."

Leheudry made no attempt to move.

"I'd just as soon wait for you here."

Quinette put on a tone of indifference.

"Just as you like. I would rather have shown you the place I mean. In case you don't like it. Besides, it's better to make sure that it's empty."

"Not likely to be any lice there, are there? She's particular, you know."

Quinette pushed Leheudry gently forwards.

"Come on, hurry up! We can't keep her waiting at that tram-car stop like this."

At last Leheudry entered the gallery at right angles. He kept on exploring the walls with the light of his torch.

"She'll never come to a place like this. Never in this world," he repeated. "You don't know her. You get such funny ideas. Never—not she!"

"Oh well, that's easily settled. She can wait outside, at the entrance to the gallery. She won't be afraid there. I'll come and fetch you."

"In that case, it's not worth while going any farther."

QUINETTE'S CRIME

"Of course it is! Just a little farther. I didn't think you were such a coward as this."

Quinette felt for his pocket and plunged his hand into it.

"Hell!" said Leuhedry; "I'm not going any farther."

He bent forward, with his feet a little far apart in the dust, humping his back. He still pointed his torch at the end of the underground passage. But its beam remained steady, like the stare of a terrified animal.

"What's that over there?" Quinette asked him suddenly, almost with a cry. "There, right in front of you! . . . Turn the light on it!"

He took advantage of the sound of his own words, and a noisy clearing of his throat with which he followed them, to cover a sliding and clicking of metal.

Leuhedry recoiled a half-step backwards, but he was staring straight in front of him as hard as he could. He was trembling.

Quinette put his pistol within a couple of inches of the back of his head and fired twice, deliberately.

An instant later he found himself deafened, in complete darkness, enveloped in the smell of powder. He took just enough time to ask himself whether he was not in his own bed in the rue Dailloud, just coming out of a nightmare. Then he took the second electric torch out of his pocket. He switched it on.

Leuhedry lay at his feet, face downwards, his body oddly twisted. A fine smoke still hung in the air, mingled with settling dust. The other electric torch had fallen to the ground, some distance away from Leuhedry.

"The battery may still be working. Anyway, mustn't leave any kind of trace."

He picked up the torch.

Then he made his way to the end of the passage, identified

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a cavity in the rock face on the left-hand side, fumbled in it, brushed away the dust, and took out of it a litre bottle full of a greenish liquid, and a big yellow sponge.

He went back to the body and examined it for a moment. Lacking though he was in experience of such matters, he was quite sure that the man was dead. He moved the body a little, not without difficulty, and turned it half over, so that the back of the head lay flat on the ground.

Then he tried to make the sponge balance on the face. But the sponge had a tendency to slip off, one side or the other. He had to dig a cavity in it with his pocket-knife, more or less corresponding with the outline of the nose, the forehead, and the cheek-bones.

When the sponge seemed to be steady, he uncorked the litre bottle and gently poured the liquid on to it. It was only then that he asked himself whether the two shots might not have been heard outside or by possible occupants of another gallery. But he asked himself the question with complete presence of mind.

His hand, which barely trembled, did not hurry as he went on pouring the green liquid on to the big sponge. It seemed to change colour, and it underwent, in all the cracks in its surface, shrivellings, shrinkings, sudden witherings, as though the liquid with which it was soaked and streaming was already beginning to consume it.

THE END

QUINETTE'S CRIME

Synopsis of previous instalments :

It is the 6th of October, 1908. Suburban Paris goes to work.

Juliette Ezzelin goes into the shop of Quinette, the bookbinder, and leaves a book with him. He makes an odd impression upon her. On her way back, she notices, in an alley, a man flattening himself curiously against the wall. This man, a few minutes later, bursts into Quinette's shop and asks if he may have a wash. His hands, his clothes, are stained with blood. Quinette prevails upon this man to meet him that evening.

He then takes a turn around the district where the man lives, to find out whether there is any talk about a crime committed in the neighbourhood. Shall he hand the man over to the police or not?

A little later he goes to his rendezvous in the rue Saint-Antoine. He meets his man of the morning, who, by a complicated itinerary, takes him to the back room of a little wine-shop in the Jewish quarter. Quinette extracts a half-confession of his crime from him, obtains some details intermingled with evasions, and offers him his advice and assistance. The bookbinder follows the suspected murderer to the hiding-place which he has chosen, in the rue Taillepain. They talk. How are they to side-track suspicion? Quinette discovers a way out. But an incident reveals the fundamental dishonesty of the stranger, whose name he finds is Leheudry.

A week later the newspapers announce that in a hovel in the Vaugirard district the body of an old woman, murdered about a week ago, has just been discovered. Juliette goes to fetch her book. The job is not finished. Quinette has other things on his mind. Since that morning, when he read the news and realised that the crime has been discovered, he has been thinking out a plan of action. He begins by making a careful inspection of Leheudry's trunk.

Quinette goes off to meet Leheudry, finds him in a bar, takes him inside Saint-Merri's Church, and questions him. The interrogation is continued in a café. The bookbinder learns that Leheudry has entrusted the "swag" to Sophie Parent, who keeps a stationery-shop.

Quinette visits the scene of the crime. He learns that the concierge caught a glimpse of Leheudry. Early in the afternoon he goes to see Sophie Parent and persuades her to hand over to him the key of the safe where she is keeping the swag. Next day, consumed with desire to discover how much the police know about the crime, Quinette calls at the local police station and suggests that he might be able to help find the murderer. Later, while waiting for a further police rendezvous, he meets Leheudry and, walking with him along a canal bank, the idea occurs to him of ridding himself of further embarrassment by pushing the man into the canal.

Our Contributors

L. A. G. STRONG, three parts mixed Irish and one part West Country English, owes much to this mongrelism, which has not only mingled Celt and Saxon in his blood, but has made him free of two distinct backgrounds. He was educated at Brighton College, from where he went as a classical scholar to Wadham College, Oxford. Beginning to write verse, and later short stories, he waited till he was thirty-three before publishing his first novel. Three volumes of his short stories have been issued, and a fourth is likely to appear during the next twelve months.

BILL ADAMS is an Englishman, now resident in California. His sea stories have been published for many years in various English and American magazines, and have appeared in two or three collections of short stories. His published work also includes a volume of poems entitled *Wind in the Topsails*. As a sailor he had many years' experience in "windjammers" in every part of the world.

NANCY HALE is a citizen of the United States and the author of a novel, *The Young Die Good*. Her short stories have appeared in Mr. E. J. O'Brien's "Best American Short Stories." She was awarded the O. Henry Memorial Prize in 1933 for the best American short story of the year.

V. S. PRITCHETT was born in Ipswich in 1900. After a nondescript education he set about earning his living at the age of sixteen and had many and various jobs in England and abroad before he began to write. He spent several years in France, Spain and Ireland. His first book, *Marching Spain*, described a march from South to North in that country, a book which has been ranked with Belloc's *Path to Rome* and Borrow's *Bible in Spain*. He has written two novels and a book of short stories: *The Spanish Virgin*. He has just finished a third novel.

URSULA RIDDLE is Northumbrian by descent. She was born at Blackheath, and has lived in Kent, Sussex and Norfolk, and now lives in London. She has studied at the Slade School. She has recently taken to writing, and had her first story published in the *London Mercury*, last year. She is at present working on a novel.

LUIGI PIRANDELLO, though first famous in England as a playwright of extraordinary talent and originality (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Henry IV*, etc.), is now becoming equally well known as an acknowledged master of the short story. His short stories run into thirteen volumes called *Novelle per un anno* ("Short Stories for a Year"). His idea was to write 365 stories, one for each day of the year, but actually he has only completed about 170. In the best of his stories the scene is laid in Sicily, among the peasants or the middle classes. He was born at Girgenti, in Sicily, in June 1867, and was educated in Rome and at the university of Bonn. He lives in Rome, and some years ago was made a member of the Italian Academy.

Miss Joan Redfern is well known as a translator from the Italian. Her most important work was her translation into English of the great Italian classic, *The History of Italian Literature* by Francesco De Sanctis.

DOUGLAS BOYD, a son of the manse, was born in 1902 in a little village called Two Waters, near Boxmoor. Recently, in order to gather material for a novel, he spent nine months in the East End of London, giving much of his spare time to the work of the Children's House, Bow, and the Kingsley Hall, a centre of recreation for the youth of Poplar, and both under the direction of Miss Muriel Lester. He lived in a small room of a very dingy house, his furniture only a camp-bed, a table, one chair, and a gas-ring on which he prepared his own meals. He was glad to leave its solitude and return to the country's green fields and sun-crossed lanes. He has a great interest in the modern short story.

BARBARA PITT-HARDACRE was born and brought up in London. She went to University College, London, taking an Honours degree in French literature, and also studied for some time at the Sorbonne in Paris. Since her marriage she has lived abroad, first in Egypt, and then in the Far East. Her home is now in Sarawak, that romantic land of the "White Rajah," where her husband is an officer in the Government Service.

JULES ROMAINS, the first three volumes of whose immense cross-section of Paris life, *The Sixth of October*, *Quinette's Crime* and *Childhood's Loves*, will shortly be followed by *Eros in Paris*, has now secured a permanent place in European literature. The story of Quinette the book-binder, which has been told serially in the last six issues of this Magazine comes to an end for the time being in this month's instalment.

